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A WINTER ROMANCE IN POPPY LAND

"You ain't gittin' a bone fellun, is you, Miss June?"

A WINTER ROMANCE IN POPPY LAND

UNA NIXSON HOPKINS

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RICHARD G. BADGER
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TO

M. H. A.

"FAMILY"

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ILLUSTRATIONS

"You ain't gittin' a bone fellun is you, Miss June?" ..... *Frontispiece*

To face page

"There was the rush of eager horses"..... 48

"With an eye of affection the Major looked back toward the snow covered heights"..... 76

"Stepping toward them he said confusedly, 'Have I the honor of guests?'"..... 98

"It's a good story William"..... 152

"Some day Miss June's a-goin' to be left 'lone in this big worl'" 194

The illustrations are from photographs by F. W. Martin, Harold A. Parker, and Ferdinand Ellerman.

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A WINTER ROMANCE IN POPPY LAND

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I

THE Overland Limited was several hours late when it thundered into Pasadena. It sent a shiver through the palms and precipitated a shower of rose-petals from the vine-covered lattices flanking the station. With that keen sense of relief, which is bred of the fatigue of a long journey, the passengers poured out into the fresh air, and the station platform was soon de-

luged with the various paraphernalia of travel.

During the last hours of the way, the scenery had changed with dramatic swiftness. As the train crossed the San Bernardino Range, a snow-storm was raging, in comparison with which, an ordinary Eastern blizzard would have seemed a mere tempest in a teapot. When the engine finally poked its nose out of the snow-drifts, and the train descended the steep grade, the transformation of scene was as sudden as though effected by pressing an electric button.

Like a carpet, deftly unrolled by a stage-hand, a vivid green spread out over the valley. The gray, murky sky that had threatened the mountain-tops, was now replaced by one of a Pacific blue. Instead of sleet and snow and raging wind, glorious sunshine. It flooded the range-groves; it melted the snow on the line of cars and sent little rivulets down the window-glass. The orange-trees, with their compact, dark green foliage, appeared as if wearing velvet hoods, to protect them from the snow, which might fall upon them from the peaks above. Lit-

tle villages, nestled among groves of live-oaks, gave a human interest to the bright landscape. At the foot of the Sierra Madres lay Pasadena, "Crown of the Valley;" like a fragrant garden, with its sweet-scented hedges; shaded by broad-leaved fig-trees and feathery palms.

Among the descending passengers there were tourists of differing degrees, bearing various hall-marks of travel. Some were there, who, at the first flurry of snow in their Eastern homes, almost involuntarily had turned the key in the door and set their faces toward California. Others, at one time or another, had been members of flying excursion parties to the Western coast. In consequence they were now prepared to misinform their fellow travellers with regard to everything in sight. There too was the genuine "tenderfoot," who, for the first time was experiencing the charm of passing from snow to roses within a few days. The majority were on pleasure bent. A few were in search of health.

Noticeable among those leaving the train was a woman, whom Nature had borne across the

half-century line, without making the fact too apparent. She was accompanied by a pretty girl about nineteen, evidently her daughter. The mother was aristocratic in bearing. The lines of her mouth ended in little asterisks, probably caused by her habit of accentuating her opinions with compressed lips. Her somewhat haughty expression had no doubt been emphasized by looking out upon the world through the violet-tinted window-panes of her Beacon Street residence.

The face of the girl was unusually interesting. She impressed you—Well,—as being just the kind of girl one would like to know. Her paleness, as well as her mother's solicitude suggested the truth; they had come because of her health. That she was not ill, to the extent of having lost interest in life, was indicated by her well-groomed appearance. She wore a natty tailored suit of brown, topped with a fetching toque. This was set on her golden-brown hair at an indefinable angle which added a somewhat whimsical charm.

The hotel to which they were going was only a stone's throw from the station—a woman throwing the stone. Bougainvillea covered the walls and hung perilously from the roof top. Roses and carnations bordered the garden paths, as if it were June instead of November. Women, whose summery gowns matched the flowers, chatted gaily in the shade of palms or exchanged confidences among the magnolias and myrtles.

The scarcity of men appeared to bear out to some degree the description of California given by Cortez in the sixteenth century: "A land entirely inhabited by women." That there were men among the hotel guests, the saints bear witness! At this hour, however they were either golfing, riding, or motoring. But, the whole truth told, the proportion of femininity was more than double that of the *real* Garden of Eden.

The mother left to the daughter the responsibility of registering. In a hand, which indicated character, the girl wrote—

Mrs. Winthrop
Boston
June Winthrop

This done, she turned back and ran her eye over several pages of the big book, in the hope of finding the name of a friend. She discovered none. The majority of the names, though, were surprisingly familiar. This familiarity she soon realized, arose through her having so often seen them in the advertising pages of the popular magazines. There were inventors of every thing—from mouse-traps to threshing-machines. Makers of tooth powder and back combs had written their names in democratic proximity to those of doctors, lawyers, merchants and—the jingle complete—a thief—with apologies to modern phraseology—a "grafter."

The name set down just above their own attracted the young girl's attention. It was written in broad, inky strokes.

George Oliver Bond Indiana

Both the name and the handwriting looked familiar, but she could place neither.

II

ON entering their apartments Mrs. Winthrop and her daughter were greatly surprised to find huge bouquets of Duchesse roses, to which were appended the cards of Major and Mrs. Knowles. The Major had been an army comrade of the late General Winthrop, although for years Mrs. Winthrop had known nothing of his whereabouts. The Major, however, had learned of the expected arrival of the Win-

throps. The week before, the hotel clerk with their telegram in his hand, had inquired whether the Major happened to know this particular family from his own corner of the world. The Winthrops' trunks had just come up, when Major and Mrs. Knowles appeared in person. General Winthrop's widow had never liked Mrs. Knowles. Years before she had lost all patience with the Major for his unfaltering following of his wife's "wandering foot." But Mrs. Winthrop was now in a strange country with an invalid daughter, and her affectionate greeting of Mrs. Knowles was sincere, for she was truly glad to see an old acquaintance.

The Major was still a rather fine-looking man, though he had a somewhat washed-out appearance, with a suggestion of green in his countenance, like a faded portrait of Reynolds. Indeed, in the Major's case, life's pigments had grown rather dull. His once elegant and dignified manner had gradually given place to an irritable, nervous air. So many domestic breezes had blown the Major's way, he had come to have the

constant appearance of looking about him for a draft. The Major was a good man, however, with no end of common sense, which, for the sake of peace, he was forced to keep carefully concealed from his wife.

Mrs. Knowles was of the dowager type. She was hopelessly addicted to the playing of Bridge and the crocheting of shawls. This she occasionally offset by the reading of up-to-date, semi-religious literature. She talked "New Thought" and thought "new dress." The former served her as a patent medicine, which she administered to her soul *ad lib.* without knowing or caring what constituted its ingredients. The latter, through her ardent efforts to keep up with the ever changing fashions, afforded her a species of mental gymnastics.

Most of his wife's hobbies, particularly that for travel, the Major humored. It was the easier way. From their travels, however, Mrs. Knowles gained but little. Her mental attic was not equal to storing up its benefits.

When the door closed upon the Major and

his wife, Mrs. Winthrop and June began to dress for dinner. June had not seen them since she was a child. "So that's Major Knowles!" she said. "Well, he's terribly limp. That's all I've got to say about him. I thought in my heart I'd broken him, when we shook hands. His arm went down like that old pump-handle, when the well on the farm went dry."

Mrs. Winthrop looked out of the window dreamily, recalling the past. "The truth is, daughter, I'm afraid almost any one would be limp, after having lived with Maria Knowles for thirty years."

June laughed. "She reminds me so far of a character study in a story, that, even if you don't exactly admire, makes good spicy reading."

When Mrs. Winthrop and June went down to dinner, they found a table arranged for them next to that of the Knowles'—. What perplexed them was, that not only these friends, but others about them were smiling.

The looks exchanged signified that they were themselves the occasion of these amused smiles.

Neither the mother nor the daughter could solve the mystery. Mrs. Knowles put out an arresting hand as they passed her chair. "My dears, we can't help being amused at your roses." Not only June, but her mother as well, wore corsage bouquets of their Duchesse roses. "You know," Mrs. Knowles continued patronizingly, "Californians never wear flowers, and you've branded yourselves as 'tourists unlimited.' "

June let her flowers fall into her lap as she sat down, but her mother made hers even more conspicuous and sat stiff as a Tudor rose.

There was silence between them for a moment, then June said "I feel just like a corner mantel—my face to every one and my back fast against the wall."

Her mother coldly surveyed their fellow-diners.

"Never mind, mumsie dear, we don't care if we do serve them a 'tourist menu.' What if we don't know everything! Then we've got something to look forward to. I wonder who all these people are!" She looked around the room

with cheerful interest. "Isn't it funny that most all the men have white hair? They don't look so very old either!"

Still continuing the calm survey of the tables, Mrs. Winthrop replied: "I suppose it has come from their working so hard to make money."

Then indulging herself in a pet weakness, she quoted:

"The Sire of gods and men, with hard decrees,
Forbids our plenty to be bought with ease."

To this June assented by taking a salted almond.

In the middle of the night it began to rain. The sky emptied itself in bucketfuls, rather than drops. The late arrivals from "back east" could only console themselves by remembering that the second destruction of the world is not predicted to come by flood.

June's sleep was broken by the storm. Through her sub-consciousness ran the name—George Oliver. She seemed to see it on a large,

buff envelope, which she handed to her brother who was lying, very weak and pale, on a bed.

In the morning she woke with a start. The sunshine was streaming into her room, just as if there had been no storm. Suddenly she remembered distinctly, that when her brother Jack came home ill from college three years before, he had spoken often of a George Oliver, and that during Jack's illness he received several letters from Oliver. June had frequently carried her brother's mail upstairs. Now she understood why his handwriting in the hotel register had seemed so familiar.

Having established the identity of the name which had been puzzling her, June, all excitement, tapped on her mother's door and told her of the incident.

The prospect of seeing a friend of Jack's aroused even Mrs. Winthrop from her usual calm, and after breakfast she asked Major Knowles to look up Mr. Oliver.

"I wonder whether he's a millionaire or an invalid," was the Major's observation. "They

are the only kind of young men you ever find about these hotels."

June and her mother with Mrs. Knowles, waited in the Moorish tea room. They were looking over the morning paper when Major Knowles returned, triumphantly, with young Oliver.

As the Major pushed aside the oriental hangings at the door, and Oliver stepped into the room, he made a striking picture.

He was tall and broad—with the manner of a man who is sure of himself.

"Jack's friend, Mr. Oliver," the Major announced jocularly.

"A sufficient recommendation for any one, Mr. Oliver." Mrs. Winthrop held out her hand cordially. Mrs. Knowles was effusive as usual. But June, greatly impressed with Oliver's appearance, in an attempt to hide it, greeted him with a slight air of hauteur which only made her bewitching.

Oliver seemed likable and attractive, but there was no memoranda of his life in his face to in-

dicate his character. There was, however, a force about him, which made one feel that he was capable of being either a blessed saint or a powerful sinner.

In the course of the talk that followed Oliver's introduction, it came out that he possessed a guarantee to popularity—otherwise a touring car. And before he left the little company, he had invited them all to go motoring that afternoon.

III

NOVEMBER had passed and Christmas was at hand.

The hotel was crowded. Every evening the great corridors and dancing room presented scenes which for brilliancy could not have been surpassed in any part of the ultra fashionable world. The women were wonderfully gowned. The gems displayed were worth a ransom.

June had been forbidden to dance, but she and

her mother looked on a little while every evening. Occasionally June joined the young set in a game of cards.

George Oliver was seldom seen below stairs after nine o'clock. He gave no reasons but simply excused himself at that hour and disappeared.

"You go to bed with the chickens, Oliver," the Major said one evening.

Oliver smiled and replied: "I'm so high up it's necessary for me to start early in order to reach my room before morning."

"It's odd," Major Knowles remarked to his wife, as he looked after Oliver, "that a fellow with his money can be satisfied in a back room at the top of the house."

"Do you think he has so much money?" Mrs. Knowles' tone was incredulous.

"Of course," the Major was emphatic. "Oliver spends a small fortune every week on that auto alone."

"What do you really think of him, dear?" Mrs. Knowles called the Major "dear" when-

ever she wished to gain his confidence.

"Bully chap" was the prompt reply. "But I can't just see what he's doing around here so long. A healthy man of his age ought to be attending to business somewhere."

"Do you think it's June?" Mrs. Knowles moved her chair closer to the Major.

"I can't say," he spoke doubtfully. "It certainly wasn't June that brought him here in the first place. I like Oliver," the Major concluded, "but he's a man who never gives his confidence to any one."

George Oliver seemingly had given his four new friends sufficient opportunity to become acquainted with him. Almost every day he took Mrs. Winthrop and June motoring. Frequently the Major and Mrs. Knowles were included in all day trips to neighboring towns.

In spite of all the learned discourses on the beauty of conduct, external attributes usually do their work in the little love dreams of life before conduct is in sight.

June had reckoned with herself after the first

few meetings with George Oliver. Alone in her room one morning she stood before the mirror and eyed herself critically. "June Winthrop," she said aloud, "are you going to be a fool or not? It's a question I want answered at once."

"Are you—or are you not going to fall head over heels in love with that man Oliver—" her tone was scornful. "You have common sense, now exercise it. If you can't have a good time and yet hold on to your heart strings, you'll have to give up motoring and all the rest of the fun. Promise to be good?"

The face in the mirror nodded. "Cross your heart?" Another nod. "Hope to die if you don't keep your promise?" Still another nod. Then apparently from the mirror laughter—laughter that ended in tears.

June wiped them away hastily, and tiptoed closer to the mirror and whispered "I loved him the moment I set eyes on him. You know I did, Face, but nobody else shall know—I'll die first. I'm going to be just as independent and saucy as

a girl can be from now on. And whenever I see George Oliver coming my way, I promise you I'll devote myself to that lonesome looking invalid man, who seems always to be waiting for me at the tea room door. Now that we have had it out, life will be easier, for there are things difficult to say even to one's own face."

The weeks had gone by and June kept her promise.

Mrs. Knowles had invited the Winthrops and Oliver for mid-day dinner, Christmas. One of the hotel's private dining rooms had been set aside for her use—elaborately decorated with California holly and Christmas greens.

In the afternoon the plan was to run over to Los Angeles for the Christmas celebration at the old plaza church, to which Oliver had received an invitation for himself and friends from one of the Padres with whom he had become acquainted.

The dinner was a highly artistic affair—all that Mrs. Knowles could have wished even in her most ambitious moments. The Major was

talkative and in a state of felicity. The little gay dining room and family board were to him a semblance of home—a thing he had not known for twenty years. The entire dinner, of course, had been ordered beforehand, but between courses, the Major was seen to feel about the table cloth for his menu card. His wife rallied him, and explained to the guests that her husband was never cut out for a domestic man.

Everybody was happy, or pretended to be. Mrs. Winthrop, who in her heart was homesick for Jack, found comfort in talking to Oliver. June was charming in a dark red gown which toned with the red of the holly and set off her coloring to advantage. Oliver, handsome and debonair, sent admiring glances across the table to her without the least attempt at dissimulation. She, however, followed the promptings of her head, rather than her heart, and returned his glances with obvious dignity. Capricious and daring in her talk when she addressed Oliver, June never for one moment fanned his vanity.

The dinner was a great success. And alto-

gether the conversation was as well spiced as the pudding.

It was a delightful nine-mile ride to Los Angeles. The beautiful landscape served as a text for converse to begin with, but "no human being ever spoke of scenery for above two minutes at a time," and every member of the party lapsed into silence and gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the ride.

On reaching the city they went first through the old part of the town, where picturesque, crumbling adobes contested the ground with aspiring commercial blocks.

Soon they arrived at the Plaza Church. Its yellowish-gray façade, patched and seamed with age, stood out against the bluest of skies. In front of the church was the old public square—or plaza—where a medley lot of people lounged in the sunshine. Beyond the plaza lay Chinatown, its gaily painted buildings showing through the trees.

Oliver's car came to a stop. Already the courtyard connected with the church, was full

of Spanish merrymakers. The Padre whom Oliver knew came forward and extended his *patte de velours* as he welcomed his guests.

The Patio was vivid with color. Three Christmas trees stood in the center. They were bright with tinsel and thickly hung with gifts. The parishioners were scattered about in happy groups. Gay señoritas flirted with their cavaliers under the palms and set their elders gossiping. Black-eyed youngsters cast longing glances at the glittering trees. In their moist hands they held bright red tickets, which entitled them to gifts, for which they waited patiently, reared as they were in the land of Mañana.

In a mellow voice one of the Padres started: "My country 'tis of Thee"— He wished to show that his people were good patriots. The Major and Oliver bared their heads. But their hats were soon replaced. The limited amount of their English made even the singing of *one* verse a sore tax on the parishioners.

La Jota, an old Spanish dance, was tripped

to Spanish music by the merry feet of old and young.

Then there was more singing—mostly hymns —rendered in soft Spanish cadences. Finally came the distribution of gifts, which took a long time—afterward dancing again.

During the program June and Oliver shared one of the rear wooden benches with a row of olive skinned, fun-poking boys and girls. The older members of the party were given seats of honor in front.

"How lovely it has been!" June had taken on something of the coquettish air of the pretty señoritas around her. Oliver himself looked no less a cavalier, than those enjoying the dance, as he said:

"I assure you that it has been lovely for me, Miss Winthrop." Oliver bent forward and looked into June's face, as he added—"Any place on earth would be lovely to me if you were only there."

June, crimson and confused, was trying to frame an answer when her mother with the Ma-

jor and Mrs. Knowles came up.

"We might easily imagine ourselves back in another century," Oliver said nonchalantly, as he and June rose and they all stood at one side, enjoying the picture—"if it were not for my car there in the foreground."

"Its been a fine trip, Oliver," the Major said, as he put his foot on the step. "I don't know when I've enjoyed myself so much!"

As they turned homeward, all the glories of the setting sun were reflected from the distant snow capped peaks.

IV

THE week following Christmas was a gala one in the hotel, and besides elaborate preparations went on for the annual Tournament of Roses New Year's Day.

June took part in most of the festivities, but Oliver was conspicuous by his absence. June was piqued. She found some consolation in the fact that Oliver had invited them all to see the tournament procession from his car New Year's

morning, lunch *al fresco,* and witness the chariot race in the afternoon.

"If we were the weatherman's old uncle, and about to die and leave him a fortune, he couldn't have given us a better day!" George Oliver said as he handed his guests into his car. As this was a holiday, he was to be his own chauffeur. June was given the seat at his side.

For the first morning of the New Year, nature had summoned all her charms. The sun rose clear in a cloudless sky, as if it would be early at the fête. The snow on the mountains sent a chill through the air—but everywhere, there was the breath of flowers—the thousands of flowers that had been gathered to adorn the festival.

The car sped down the avenue, gay with bunting and tournament flags. Clear bugle notes reached their ears. A Happy New Year was on every tongue. The whole country around had come to welcome the New Year.

"I think I know some lines that just describe this day," June said to Oliver, and she repeated

gaily:

"The morn is full of holiday; loud bells
With rival clamors ring from every spire;
Cunningly-station'd music dies and swells
In echoing places; when the winds respire,
Light flags stream out like gauzy tongues of fire;
A metropolitan murmur, lifeful, warm,
Comes from the northern suburbs; rich attire
Freckles with red and gold the moving swarm;
While—here—and there—clear trumpets
—blow—blow, oh dear! I've forgotten the rest of it. I never tried to be brilliant in my life that I didn't come to grief."

"You did very well," Oliver was consoling.

"Mother usually says the verses at our house, I thought I'd get ahead of her this time!" June looked over her shoulder at her mother who was sandwiched so tight between the Major and Mrs. Knowles that ordinary speech even would seem impossible.

The pageant was forming. Oliver drove his car into a side street, to get a position in the shade.

Mrs. Knowles had been very quiet. She turned to Mrs. Winthrop and said in an undertone. "I wish the Major would buy a car. You know you can make so many people under obligations to you—"

The procession was coming near. The marshals came into view, riding gaily caparisoned horses. Their bridles were of wrought silver —relics of the old Spanish days. Bands of music followed. Then came the great floats, solidly banked with flowers. The devices were various. An airship, made entirely of sweet peas, floated above the crowds. A calla-lily boat sailed gracefully by. It was followed by Babes-in-the-Woods, peering out from dim-eyed violets, massed in pony-carts. Grave city officials looked conscious, when the crowds cheered their tally-ho, decked with vivid poinsettias. Chinamen bore a great dragon, some ninety feet long, writhing in its tinsel and gold. It frightened

the small children and made them cling crying, to their mothers' petticoats. Behind it walked solemn celestials in gorgeous robes, with floating banners. Still more bands of music! more floats! more flowers! Then—the—Queen of the Tournament! She was throned under a canopy of cream-white roses and surrounded by her Maids of Honor. Her white satin robe and the jewels in her diadem gleamed against the flowery background.

When the Queen and her court had passed, the crowds began to separate. The majority of the people followed to the park, where prizes for the best displays were to be awarded, and the races would take place.

Oliver's car quickly wove its way in and out among the crowd. He wished to arrive in season to witness the grand entrance into the park.

June was wild with excitement, and exclaimed over everything that passed. For Oliver, apparently it was enough just to be near June. Mrs. Winthrop's face was flushed with pleasure. The Major and Mrs. Knowles had seen

other New Year's pageants. The Major declared this was better than any. His wife, wearied from a half dozen Bridge parties during the last week, was hopelessly bored.

Oliver had brought with him a delicious luncheon from the caterer's, and all enjoyed lending a hand in setting it out.

"My dear, you are looking a thousand times better!" said Mrs. Knowles to June. Rosy and smiling, the girl was passing the plates of salad.

"It's the California air," Oliver suggested.

"I've my own opinions about health," the Major broke in, as he sat down the ripe olives. "There's nothing for it like a good time and—freedom."

"Freedom!" repeated his wife, as she almost choked the Major with her look, "who hasn't their freedom, Major Knowles? June, I am sure, has never been caged."

"The truth is, Maria,"—the Major was interrupted by the passing of the jelly—"the truth is, there's more than one kind of a cage. It isn't necessary to be behind bars, to be caged."

He spoke with feeling.

Oliver, fearing the whole party was about to be precipitated into a domestic war, opened a long pasteboard box, filled with pretty baskets of strawberries, and passed them hurriedly. The talk turned directly upon the novelty of eating strawberries out of doors on New Year's Day.

V

THE scene at the park was strikingly beautiful. In the background the mountains—their summits whitened with the newly fallen snow—were outlined against an azure sky. As the eye followed down the mountain-sides, groves of live oaks came into view. In the near foreground were the brilliant flower-bedecked equipages lined up against the wall of the circular track. In the boxes and on the grand stand, a mass

of happy, laughing, chattering spectators.

The Queen of the Tournament, seated under her royal canopy, was surrounded by the ladies and gentlemen of her court.

The chariots came within the inclosure. They were of Roman pattern. The drivers wore the light costume of the Roman charioteer.

Garcia, a handsome Spaniard in a white tunic, entered the arena first. His chariot was of ivory and gold, drawn by four milk-white horses. Following him came Winters in red silk tunic. He drove four big bays attached to a chariot of flaming red, decorated in gold. Wolf, who made the third entry, came all in black—horses—chariot—and tunic. Arturo, the fourth entry, in tunic of green, drove sorrel horses harnessed to a great chariot.

After finishing their luncheon, Oliver and his guests had gone to the other side of the park to witness the barbecue. Hundreds were being fed with the steaming meat, taken from the pit in the ground, in which it had been roasted.

"I feel just as if I were in a play," said June,

as they walked back across the green to take seats in their box. "Doesn't the scene make you think of those highly colored old prints, with titles in two or three languages—

'L'ete et L'hiver
der Sommer und der Winter
Summer and Winter' "

"It certainly is great," said Oliver.

June's eyes followed the chariots—"I'm for that handsome Spaniard with the white horses. I can tell by the way they hold their heads that they'll win. But those bays," she added rather scornfully, "look to me like plow horses!"

"You think so?" They were walking slowly now. The others were far ahead. "The bays *do* look a trifle awkward." Oliver walked still more slowly. He was silent for a few moments. "I'd like to wager on the bays." Oliver looked straight into June's eyes as he spoke.

"What will you wager?" June asked eagerly. "I'm sure of my white horses."

"I'll wager my life." The dense crowd separated them for a moment. Oliver reached June's side again. The Major was beckoning to them to hurry.

"We must be quick!" June spoke excitedly, "they'll close the wicket." But Oliver was in no haste to join the others. Coming very close to June, he said in a low voice: *"You* are the stake, Miss Winthrop—*June!* I determined to win you the first time I saw you. That morning in the tea room."

Again they were parted by the eager crowds. When Oliver caught up to June, she laughed mockingly "Oh, you don't even know me yet!"

"Know you! why I've known you a thousand years!"

A man at June's elbow leaned forward. He looked wonderingly into the face of the girl, whom some one had known a thousand years.

"Tell me, tell me quick, June, may I stake my life—everything—on the bays?"

The sights and sounds about her filled June with a romantic ardor. Her dark eyes flashed.

"I'll take the wager!" she said—"but"—she added, and there was challenge in her voice—"*Garcia* will win!"

They had reached their box. Oliver handed her in. The others had already taken their seats. Oliver began to explain the race-schedule to the ladies. "The first race is to be run between Garcia and Winters. The second between Wolf and Arturo. The third will be run by the losers of the first and second. The *winners* of the first and second races will run the fourth."

Again and again a false start was made. The charioteers were called back to their places by the ringing of the bell.

The horses were so excited, it was almost impossible to bring their eight heads to anything like a line—. At last, the signal to *go* was given!

There was the rush of eager horses—flashes of color were seen in a whirlwind of dust. The white horses appeared *as one line*. The bays, as they ran, straggled out into an awkward angle.

"There was the rush of eager horses."

Garcia has the pole! soon he is in the lead! A blur—as if two red and white clouds had come together—the two chariots have barely escaped locking wheels! They are in such a maze of dust, it is almost impossible to see them. From this they emerge, as they come nearer. The horses of the two chariots are neck and neck. Garcia is fast gaining. On and on—faster and faster he comes!—until his horses—plunging and foaming, and several lengths ahead—pass under the wire.

A deafening shout went up from the crowd, as if from one voice. June gave Oliver an exultant look. He returned it with placid confidence. "This is only a half-mile track!" he said. "The heat is not ended. They must go round once more."

Winters had not spoken to his bays, until Garcia passed under the wire. Then, he loosened his lines, which he had held taut. He leaned over and spoke one word to his animals.

At the sound of his voice, his horses swept forward like a hurricane—crossed Garcia's path

—and took the pole.

A second time Winters leaned forward and spoke to his horses. A second time they leaped ahead with fresh impetus.

Now he is so far in advance of Garcia, he dares to look back. He sees his rival far in the rear.

Once more, Winters speaks to his bays! once more they plunge forward! Easily they pass under the wire.

Oliver jumped up and down in his seat. He waved his hat and shouted like a mad man. For once the Major forgot Maria Knowles. He yelled like a boy. June's face was scarlet. With spirit she said. "It's only the first race!"

"But I've won!" cried Oliver—

The intermission of twenty minutes was given over to the Vaqueros, who displayed their fancy riding. There was opportunity for small talk about the races and the women's gowns. The latter subject set Mrs. Knowles to talking. The costumes were elaborate—quite up to horse show standards.

After the intermission, came the race between Wolf and Arturo. It was known that Wolf's horses were blooded. From the first it was the expectation that he would win. The crowd was hardly prepared however for the spectacular finish.

They had made the first half of the race and were at the finish of the second. As they passed under the wire, Wolf's horses became frightened and entirely unmanageable.

Worked up to the highest pitch of excitement, the spectators shouted and shrieked. Amidst the din, only those very near could know that Wolf was crying for help.

Mounted police attempted to stop the maddened animals—but without avail—they could not overtake them. The Vaqueros, on their fiery bronchos, followed in wild pursuit. With their thread-like lariats they finally succeeded in entangling the foaming horses.

Compared with this scene the race itself had been mild sport!

The third race—between Garcia, June's

handsome Spaniard, and Arturo—did not cause great interest. It was run for the third prize, and was won by Garcia.

Then followed the great, deciding race between the winners in the first and second: Winters, upon whom Oliver had staked his happiness, and Wolf with his runaways. The majority of the spectators were for Wolf. Oliver—undeniably nervous—ordered lemonade of every boy that came his way. June frayed her program.

When the horses were led out, one of Winter's bays limped. Oliver, looking over June's head, said to Mrs. Winthrop, that he felt sure they could easily win, because Wolf's blacks were done up by their runaway. "Wolf's blacks ran away once, probably they can again!" was June's optimistic retort.

The start was accomplished in less time than usual.

The chariots had reached Oliver's box. Winters was ahead. Oliver stood up. He waved his hat frantically and shouted with all his might "Go! Go!"

"Sit down there! Sit down there!" people cried from every side.

Terrified at this pandemonium, Winter's animals leap forward. Their hoofs lick up the line of track as a prairie fire licks up the dry grass. The dust burns their nostrils and blinds their eyes. Under a rain of lashes they plunge madly onward. Well they know, their master never wields a whip except in a crisis. But in spite of their frantic speed, Wolf's blacks are rapidly gaining on them. They have reached the point in the course furthest from the judge's box.

Suddenly there is a terrific crash. Charioteers —maddened horses—and their chariots—are seen only as a struggling mass in a cloud of dust.

A moan goes up from the horrified spectators. Consternation reigns on all sides. Again the police and Vaqueros come to the rescue.

Breathlessly the crowd waited to know what the outcome would be.

In a few moments the two rivals were seen

coming down the track—each pale as death—an angry, red cut gleamed on Wolf's temple. They halted before the Queen's throne and made her a humble obeisance, then passed on slowly to the judge's stand.

Bleeding and limping the eight horses were led up. The judges ordered the broken chariots to be brought. From their condition they hoped to be able to decide where the blame of the collision lay.

The crowds were silent while the judges gave hearing to both sides. At last the bugle sounded.

The decision was announced.

The race was a foul. The deciding race would be run at the next Year's Tournament.

Mrs. Winthrop was the dinner hostess that evening at her regular table in the large dining room. June was perceptibly nervous. The extent of her folly was dawning upon her. She was asking herself whether the wager had been merely a holiday joke—or had George Oliver been in earnest—

They had reached the salad course, when the talk took the turn June had dreaded.

"The chariot race was magnificent, wasn't it?" Mrs. Knowles appealed directly to Oliver. Without waiting for his reply, she went on: "The outcome certainly was surprising. Why I would have wagered almost anything on those white horses—the driver was so handsome!"

"I wonder why they didn't decide the race?" Mrs. Winthrop said.

June avoided Oliver's eyes between the roses —"Perhaps it was Fate or—"

Mrs. Knowles did not wait for June to finish. "Who knows what really happened in that smash-up?"

No one answered.

"The bays were the only horses that had anything of a chance from the beginning," said Oliver decidedly. "I heard it everywhere last week. Winters, they say, is half horse himself. He's had those bays in training for years —they understand him as if they were human. Then, too, I talked with the man himself. He

told me that if the crowd kept perfectly quiet —the other man would have a show. But the moment there was shouting and confusion, his horses were off—and to win!"

"So you sent up the requisite shout, Oliver, didn't you? Perhaps you had a big wager at stake?" The Major's tone showed that he wished he had been in the sport.

"I *did* have," said Oliver.

June was intently studying the pattern of the table cloth.

"Its a pity they declared a foul!" the Major said, "you'd have got a good wad, wouldn't you?" The Major seldom laughed, but now he did so very heartily.

"Something much better than a wad!" Oliver averred with spirit. It was *his* turn to study the table cloth pattern.

"Explain, Oliver—explain," the Major insisted.

Looking up Oliver said with a laugh, "I'll tell you on the Ides of March."

VI

LIFE is a game of London Bridge. There is no telling at what moment the arms of Fate may descend upon us.

June and her mother, with Major and Mrs. Knowles were sitting in a retired corner of the hotel veranda. It was the evening following the tournament. Mrs. Knowles was repeating some tiresome gossip about how a very rich family in the house had come by their money.

June, tired of the talk, fled, and left her mother and the Major to play audience. She took refuge in the garden, where she sat down on a rustic seat. It was just within the shadow of the broad, extending arms of a huge date-palm. She listened to the call of the mocking-birds. She watched the shadows of the swaying palm leaves, patterned on the lawn by the electric lights.

Two men came from the opposite direction. They, too, seated themselves within the tree's shadow, but quite on the other side. As soon as they were seated, they began to talk. The night air carried their voices over to June.

"Of course," she heard distinctly, "both men are madly in love with the girl. So far she favors them equally. Now if Bernardo could only damage Thompson's character he might be able to carry off the prize."

There was silence. June saw the gleam of a cigar stump, which was thrown down on the path.

"Hang it! I don't know *what* to advise you."

June's first impulse was to fly. She half rose.

Her slipper made a little grating sound on the gravel. The two men did not notice it. They were absorbed in their conversation.

June could not risk the mortification of being discovered in the act of leaving. She dropped back into her seat.

The same man spoke again. "She has fine jewels, hasn't she? Heirlooms?"

"Yes, her ancestors brought them over from Spain in the early days." It was George Oliver speaking.

"Well then," said the other, "why can't you steal those heirlooms and somehow fix the blame on Thompson? In that way you could be rid of him. Then you could put Bernardo in possession of his old Tia Juana Rancho and—the girl."

The scratch of a match! He was lighting another cigar!

"There may be other ways,"—he continued. "I don't just see them, Oliver."

June was faint. The cigar smoke was blown across into her face. She stuffed her handkerchief

into her mouth to keep from coughing.

"I believe your suggestion is the only alternative, Dodge," Oliver spoke hesitatingly.

"You're the doctor!" the man whom he addressed as Dodge, rejoined.

"Yes, and a devilish poor one!" Oliver's tone was desperate.

A pair of lovers sauntered by.

The two men rose quickly and walked away.

June slipped out of the shadow, and ran to the veranda.

Her mother was still sitting there with the Major and his wife. June took a seat at one side. She must steady herself before she spoke to them. Pleading fatigue, she soon went to her room, making her way through the great halls unsteadily, as one completely dazed.

"Oliver!" she repeated on her way—"Oliver!" as if the name had a strange fascinating sound. So this was George Oliver—Jack's friend—and—hers.

Before she retired, Mrs. Winthrop looked in upon her daughter. The room was dark and

June seemed deep in slumber.

She was not asleep. She lay awake all night. Should she tell her mother the whole story? If she did, her mother would appeal to the Major and his wife for advice. What Mrs. Knowles knew, the world knew.

June shivered at the thought of the notoriety this would bring her. Over and over in her mind the same sentences ran—"If only there could be some mistake! If only I had not heard aright! If only it were not Oliver!" At dawn she dropped to sleep.

VII

MRS. WINTHROP sat by the window reading, waiting for June to waken.

Suddenly there was a loud knock at the door. It startled Mrs. Winthrop into dropping her book, and made June sit up in bed, before her eyes were really open.

There was no time to answer. Mrs. Knowles burst into the room. She precipitated her one hundred and seventy pounds of solid flesh upon

the foot of June's bed.

"My dears!" She stopped to get her breath. "An awful thing has happened!"

June was already under the impression that something had happened to *her*. Mrs. Winthrop moved her chair up to the bed, prepared for the worst.

Still breathless, Mrs. Knowles went on. "You know the Mansfields, who have a suite across the hall from you!"

Mrs. Winthrop and June nodded.

"Well, they were robbed last night—right in this very house—of thousands of dollars worth of jewels. My dears, the burglars must have passed your very doors!"

She waited dramatically for her words to take effect.

Mrs. Winthrop looked anxiously at June.

The girl was deathly pale. Again she was sitting under the palm tree. Again she was hearing the man Dodge say, "Why can't you steal those heirlooms and somehow fix the blame on Thompson?"

Mrs. Knowles' voice brought her back. "It does seem as if everybody in good social standing was being robbed." Mrs. Knowles drew a deep sigh, as if she thought her own round of the social ladder was not sufficiently high to precipitate her into such calamities.

June lay back on the pillow trembling. Then as if roused by a sudden idea, she started up like a frightened doe— *Must* she tell what she knew. She rested her face on her hand— No, she must have time to think it all out.

Mrs. Knowles, who always ran away from any unpleasantness, slipped quietly from the room. Mrs. Winthrop crossed to the other side and opened wide a window to let in the air.

"I'm better now, mother," June summoned all of her will power to say, as Mrs. Winthrop came back to the bed.

"Maria Knowles had no right to break into your room as she did," Mrs. Winthrop spoke angrily. "If you had been awake this burglar story wouldn't have shocked you—but," she added with an attempt at cheerfulness, "try to

dismiss it from your mind, daughter—it means nothing to us."

To this June made no reply, but a deep shadow passed over her face and she said, "You will go on the tally-ho drive without me this morning, won't you? I did not sleep well last night—and—I must rest."

"If you really wish me to do so," Mrs. Winthrop agreed reluctantly.

After her mother had gone, June got up and dressed, without tasting of the breakfast which had been ordered for her.

A train of awful thoughts oppressed her as she walked up and down in her room. She was calm, but the brightness had gone out of her eyes. She was suddenly grown old. She mastered her thoughts and reviewed the situation—from the day of her first meeting with Oliver.

He was so handsome and fine, everything in fact that her girlish fancy could have pictured a lover. Humiliated to the last degree she dwelt on the past few days. She recalled Oliver's look, his voice, the things that he had said. And

to think all this time she had been the mere plaything of a man who was a common—thief! She clenched her hands and the nails cut her flesh. If she could tell Jack! Yes, that was it! She would write Jack and ask him what she should do.

June had never given her mother her confidences. The two women were no more alike than a crusty tart is like the toothsome filling.

She went to the drawer and took out Jack's last letter, dated London—where he had been for several months. In it he said that he expected to be back in New York the first week of January. He would doubtless arrive about the time her letter did.

She wrote the whole affair to him—at length. How she had first seen Oliver's name on the register— How they had met him and gone about with him— What she had heard in the garden— And then—how the robbery had been committed the night before. And if Jack could read between the lines she unconsciously told him other things.

As she finished the letter there was a knock at the door. She opened it, and a bell-boy handed her a magnificent bunch of roses with Oliver's card. To June they were like a message from the dead. She steadied herself against the door and stared at the flowers as if they were evil things. Then she handed them back and said, —"wait—I wish to write a note." The note ran:

"Mr. Oliver:—I have just one thing to say to you. *Never* in any way address me again. You will understand why I do not sign my name."

She slipped a silver piece into the messenger's hand. "Take the note and the flowers back—" She could not bring herself to speak his name— "back to the man," she said, and her voice sounded unnatural even to herself. She closed the door, and for the first time gave way to an agony of tears.

Shortly there was another knock and when she did not answer it, a note was thrust under the door. She read it—

"My dear Miss Winthrop:—I can not imagine why you should have written me such a note. There evidently is a misunderstanding! May I not see you for a few moments? In God's name if I have done anything to offend you let me make it right. Yours,

GEORGE OLIVER."

June opened the door— The messenger stood against the wall with his hands in his pockets, whistling softly. "Tell—the one who sent you that there is no answer."

In the afternoon June watched the clock nervously. For when her mother returned she must give some explanation of the rupture between herself and Oliver—an excuse that would at least suffice until she could hear from Jack.

The four walls of her room seemed longer unbearable. She put on her hat and walked out into the fresh air. As she passed through the hotel every one she met was talking about the burglary. She heard some one say: "The management is certain that the work was done by a

professional, but there is absolutely no clue."

June chose a quiet street and walked rapidly, for a long distance. When she had thought of a plausible story to tell her mother, she returned to the hotel.

There were a great many people on the veranda. Suddenly, at one end, she saw George Oliver. He walked hurriedly toward her and scanned her face as he came. On the top step of the broad flight leading to the veranda they met face to face. Oliver's look was appealing —"Miss Winthrop—"

June did not allow him to finish. Now master of herself she looked him full in the face— "Let me pass, *sir,*" she said.

VIII

DURING the night there had been a snow-storm in the mountains. The Major declared he wanted to have the experience promised by the guide books—to go from roses to snow and back again in a day.

Mrs. Knowles dreaded the cold and objected. The Major insisted.

"Maria!" he stormed, "after three seasons, all you know of this country, is the hotel veran-

das!"

June was so terribly depressed, she had little heart for the expedition— But she finally decided it was better to go with the others.

They took the electric cars. After leaving the town, the road ran through olive groves and small ranches. It skirted the base of the mountains, climbed higher and higher, and wound around into a beautiful, wooded cañon.

Here the car was waiting to carry them straight up the mountain side.

Mrs. Winthrop expressed timidity, as she looked up at the slender, ladder-like road.

Mrs. Knowles, on the contrary, had all at once become enthusiastic. She had heard the talk in the car on the way up. She began to enlighten the Major about it all. This was one of the great engineering feats of the world. The incline was some per cent. steeper than that of the great Swiss Mt. Pilatus. They really ought to have the experience. It would be something to refer to, when they went to Switzerland the next summer.

June had brightened perceptibly. The cool morning air had served as a tonic.

As the white car began the ascent, she asked, "Where would we go if this cable should break?"

"That depends, Miss June," the Major replied, "on how well we have kept the commandments."

At the top of the incline, they found a foot of snow on the level.

"Here we are!" cried the Major. "Here's 'the heart of winter' you read about!"

They were now transferred to an electric line that would carry them on up to the tavern.

The road before them—as they caught glimpses of it—looked as if some gigantic pen had traced black scratches on the mountain side.

The air was very keen. Mrs. Knowles shrank farther into her sealskin coat. She looked like a bird in winter—its feathers all ruffled. She had changed her mind slightly, as to the joy of the trip. "Major Knowles, whatever made you bring me to this dangerous place?"

The Major sat by himself and said never a word. Mrs. Winthrop held fast to June.

All was silent except for the creak of the car, as it made its perilous way around the curves. They doubled and crossed cañons. Now they went through a snow-flurry. Now they were out in full sunshine. All the time they were slowly ascending.

Suddenly—between peaks that seemed to part of themselves, to open a way for a scene of splendor—far, far down in the distance—the gleaming Pacific!

Before them lay the fertile San Gabriel Valley. Pasadena appeared as a faint pattern traced in the green. They saw it all through an atmosphere of translucent blue.

Soon they were at the mountain tavern, which nestled among the trees. Within they found welcome and good cheer. They warmed themselves before the great, crackling hearth-fire, and the Major ordered luncheon. It was snowing hard.

During the afternoon the storm became so

furious, Major Knowles suggested that they remain all night.

After dinner they sat before the cheerful fire in the big hall with several other guests. The telephone rang. And above the hum of voices, June heard the clerk say—"Well, I'm glad they've got him."

He hung up the phone in a moment and addressed the Major over the top of his desk, which was at one side— "Perhaps you'll be interested to know that they've caught the fellow who committed the burglary down at your hotel—the phone buzzed so I didn't get his name—but I guess that's no matter."—

Everything in the room swayed before June's eyes. She did not even hear what Major Knowles said in answer.

Soon, she turned to her mother— "I'm going to my room—if you don't mind—to finish my book."

Outside, the wind howled ceaselessly. The long limbs of huge pines, with their burden of ice and snow, dragged heavily on the roof and

made weird creaking sounds. To June the storm was symbolical!

When the wind rose yet higher, shrieking and moaning, a terrible fear seized her—not fear for herself, but for George Oliver. She forgot herself, her humiliation, everything, but him. In her imagination she saw him shackled—led away. If a test of her love for him had come at that moment she would have gladly given her life to save him. Nature asserted itself and June fell asleep.

In the morning when she awoke, she looked out upon a still, magic white world. And immediately after breakfast the Major announced the return car.

Before long they were again in the midst of green groves, breathing sweet odors.

Mrs. Knowles broke out. "Well, that's done! There's one thing less on the Major's list!"

With an eye of affection the Major looked back toward the snow-covered heights from which they had come. "Maria, I'm glad I'm not you!"

The suffering June had endured the past two days culminated in the agony she felt on returning to the hotel. Her feet almost refused to carry her across the threshold as with the others of the party she entered the door.

The very first person they met told them the news—Dick, the bell-boy, had been arrested for the burglary.

But to June there was deep significance in the fact that Dick was the boy who came and went at Oliver's call. It was he who had brought her Oliver's flowers.

"With an eye of affection the Major looked back toward the snow-covered height."

IX

"MY dear I've something to tell you, the Major and I have about decided to take a furnished house." Mrs. Knowles spoke with her usual urbanity. Mrs. Winthrop was seated on the veranda, and Mrs. Knowles stood behind her. Every morning after breakfast she stood an hour to reduce her flesh. She was crocheting vigorously. "Now why don't you take a house, too? It certainly would be good for June." Without waiting for a reply to her suggestion, she rambled on. "I have discovered af-

ter three seasons at the hotel, that there are social advantages in having a house. The trouble is—if you have a fine house it's more expensive." Mrs. Knowles sighed. She greatly desired to be in the social whirl, but knew that though the Major wanted a home, he objected to an extravagant establishment.

Mrs. Winthrop was taken with the new idea. Mrs. Knowles was counting stitches preparatory to turning a corner and Mrs. Winthrop seized the opportunity. In rapid succession she put question after question about houses and their furnishing, so it took Mrs. Knowles a good long time to answer. The house question was about talked out when the Major joined them.

Mrs. Winthrop was just speaking. "Before I make any definite plans, I want to know what June would like to do. She will be down a little later." Mrs. Winthrop looked anxious— "June hasn't been nearly so well of late—in fact I feel very much troubled about her."

"I've noticed it," the Major said, gravely.

Mrs. Knowles stopped crocheting as if some-

thing had occurred to her and spoke, as from a clear sky. "I haven't seen Mr. Oliver, except in the dining-room, for several days."

The Major scowled. But Mrs. Winthrop seemed relieved that Oliver's name had been mentioned. "I must tell you," she said—she hesitated—"that Mr. Oliver and June are no longer—friends."

"Why, my dear, what *is* the matter?" Mrs. Knowles forgot that her hour was not up and dropped into one of the porch chairs.

"I can't say, but June is not even willing that I should recognize him. She says she will explain everything—soon," and Mrs. Winthrop changed the subject.

"I feel that June should see a physician. Can you recommend one?" Mrs. Winthrop included the Major and Mrs. Knowles in her glance.

A smile crossed the Major's face. There are *several* in Pasadena. We—"

"It all depends"—the Major's wife cut him short—"on what sort of advice you want."

Mrs. Winthrop's expression grew puzzled.

"Now there's Dr. Goodman, who invariably says you need a change of climate."

Here the Major rose irritably and strode to the farther end of the veranda.

Mrs. Knowles lowered her voice. "I consulted him last spring, when I wanted to go to New York and the Major was slow about moving." She unknotted a new skein of wool and continued. "Then there's Dr. Lantana. He's pretty certain to advise European travel. He has a large clientele among the ladies in the hotel."

The Major returned to his seat, unfolded his newspaper and straightened it out with a great rustling. He apparently became engrossed in his reading.

Mrs. Knowles went on: "Of course for any one affecting nervous prostration, there isn't anybody like Dr. Goodman. He's so dear and sympathetic! Every one just adores him. You can depend on him to make the sweetest suggestions."

The Major could no longer remain in parenthesis. He laid his paper across his knee.

"Maria, Maria, don't be a fool!" he thundered. Sternly he turned to Mrs. Winthrop, took out his watch and looked at the time. As if the gentle lady had been a whole army, he said in a commanding voice, "You will find Dr. Brown at his office here in ten minutes. He is a good physician and a sensible man. He will advise you intelligently in regard to Miss June."

"What time shall we go to look at houses?" The Major's wife spoke in an abused tone.

"Wait and see what Dr. Brown says, Maria. If Mrs. Winthrop decides to go with you, then I'll order a carriage directly."

Just then June came out. There was hopelessness in her face. Since the arrest of the bellboy she realized that it was only a very short time until she must speak.

When her mother told her of the plan to take a house, she seized upon the idea, eagerly. Here was a means of escape from the hotel before the climax came.

Dr. Brown encouraged Mrs. Winthrop with regard to her daughter. The girl was suffering

from a nervous breakdown. He advised the mother by all means to take a house—one with a garden, so that her daughter could work among the flowers. She ought to live out of doors.

It was settled. The carriage was brought around. June seated herself in front with the driver, while her mother and Mrs. Knowles were taking their places.

"Our driver is a Harvard graduate—out here for his health." Mrs. Knowles said this in a penetrating whisper, that everybody could hear, then aloud: "You know, my dears, one's in a chronic state of good society in Pasadena. You can't get away from it, even if you try to."

June cast a glance at the frail looking young man beside her, and to relieve his evident embarrassment began asking questions—

"What are those queer looking trees?"

The driver was not permitted to answer. Mrs. Knowles spoke in a high voice. "Now please don't ask me—"

"As if anybody had—" June thought—

"I don't know the name of every shrub and tree we see. I've had so many otherwise pleasant drives ruined by just such questions, that I make it a practice never to answer them. But, my dears, be thankful for one thing. There are no picture galleries or monuments to rave over out here."

Mrs. Winthrop had spent her life in the shadow of Bunker Hill. Words failed her. June glanced from under her long, black lashes at the driver. He was trying to suppress a smile.

The carriage drew up in front of a real estate office. The Major had telephoned that they were coming. A young man came out and handed them a map of the city with two lists of furnished houses; villas, for Mrs. Knowles; bungalows, for Mrs. Winthrop.

Mrs. Winthrop held to the old tradition that houses for rent are usually short on paint and long on Nottingham curtains. But as they drove down the famous boulevard, where millionaires are strung together with pepper-trees and palms,

she was met with one surprise after another. Even here there were people willing to empty their closets and bureau drawers for a price—to bare the soul of their houses for a consideration.

The driver spoke for the first time— "This avenue began as a path through orange groves, later it widened into a road and now—is one of the most famous boulevards in the world."

His voice was hollow and suggested a weak chest. June looked at him sharply. There was something strangely familiar about the man. No, she had never seen him before, but how did she come by this impression!

X

IT had been agreed that Mrs. Knowles should make her choice of a house first. They drove the entire length of the boulevard and back again comparing the house numbers with their list. Then began the examination at closer range.

Important butlers opened doors that were in no need of paint, in houses where the curtains were *not* Nottingham. Grand dames swept down imposing stairways in response to the request of strangers. In a villa, showing Italian influence, a society butterfly flitted from room to

room, expatiating on the advantages of her particular chrysalis; she was leaving for a winter's stay on the continent. One handsome house was at their disposal because the family had left for a year in Japan. It seemed to them that they had the refusal of the whole boulevard.

The majority of the houses were held at a rental sufficiently high to satisfy Mrs. Knowles, who always judged the show by the price of the ticket. She found it difficult, however, to arrive at a decision. "I noticed that the piano legs were not dusted," she confided to Mrs. Winthrop, as they left one house. "Now people who don't dust their piano legs, can't be trusted to leave the house in good order for a tenant."

A little farther on Mrs. Knowles spied a villa that looked very much like a birthday cake in a cheap confectionery shop— It was so artificial, 'twas little wonder that it pleased her. But—it was off the boulevard! How could she live there!

Mrs. Winthrop and June had no difficulty in foreseeing what her decision would be.

The fire-places in this villa were still in their virgin freshness. The owner requested tenants not to build fires in them. It would smoke them! The ornate candlesticks in the drawing-room held candles, to be sure. But unlike Little Nancy Etticoat, they did not grow shorter by the conflagration of their noses—they had never known flame.

It was altogether an environment into which Mrs. Knowles fitted as if it had been made for her. She pinched the mattresses, to see if they were soft. She felt the china, to see if it was hard. In spite of all her minute inspection, she forgot to look into the coffee pot and she did not count the cooking forks. At length she announced her decision to take the villa.

Mrs. Winthrop had been dragged up attic—and down cellar stairs till she was weak with fatigue. As they went through a dark passageway, she quoted to June—

"How steep his path
Who treadeth up and down another's stairs."

"Lean on me, Mother," June said affectionately, though she herself looked like a frail lily.

When they were in the carriage again they turned into a quiet street—almost like a lane between orchards. It was the Winthrops' turn to search for a house. At first their experiences were much like those of the three bears. The houses were either too small or too large.

At last they came upon one which June called "a perfect dear!" It was low and rambling, partly hidden by orange trees, and built about a patio, which also connected with the garden by a rose-covered pergola. Sun-loving heliotrope covered the walls and specked them with a faint purple. It blended its fragrance with that of the starry jasmine which festooned the arches of the courtyard.

Mrs. Knowles knew about this place. The woman who built the house had gone East in a fit of homesickness, and left it in the charge of the gardener.

A front door is a tell-tale thing! The care-

taker lifted the huge latch—a hand-made affair of Mexican workmanship. The living room, into which the door opened directly, proved in no way a disappointment. It ran the whole width of the bungalow and opened into the patio by glass doors. The ceiling was beamed. The furnishings were antique.

"Why, mother," said June, as she stepped inside, "do see all the pretty little casement windows—and the quaint curtains that just go with the wall! One—two—three—why, there are seventeen of them!"

Mrs. Winthrop surveyed the room with satisfaction, as she sank down upon an inviting Davenport. "I feel at home for the first time since I left Boston."

Mrs. Knowles looked about critically! "But, my dears," she exclaimed, "there's not a single thing that's new!"

"I sincerely hope not." Mrs. Winthrop spoke with some asperity.

June was enthusiastic over the great fireplace. Logs were laid, all ready to blaze out at

the scratch of a match. Two little prayer chairs brought from an old English cathedral stood on either side the chimney. A "Sleepy Hollow" was placed at a tempting distance. The colonial desk at the end of the room no doubt already knew many secrets. It stood open as if ready to receive more. A grandfather's clock in the corner ticked in most friendly fashion. It robbed the place of that deserted air which vacant houses so often have.

"This must be the dining-room!" June said, as she opened a door. "Why, no! its the butler's pantry. But where's the dining-room?" She appealed to the care-taker.

"Folks *all*ways eats in this end o' th' big room. I dunno no bettah place for a beautiful young lady an' her han'some mother to eat their three meals a day in." The caretaker looked about the room as if he were seeing it for the first time.

Mrs. Winthrop was shocked at his familiarity. She gasped. "What is your name?"—as if its disclosure might throw some light on the situa-

tion.

"Michael William." He bowed politely.

"Of what nationality are you?"

" 'T all depen's on how you look at it!" the man answered with an infectious chuckle. "I'as a Spannich frien' an he *all*ways calls a hat a *sumbrello* an' he gets mad when I calls hit a hat. *'Sacre!'* sezee, 'why don't you call a *sumbrello* a *sumbrello?'*— Now my father wuz Irish an' my mother wuz cullud, but I'm a plain man an' I tries to be a Christyun an' hits no mattah ef you calls me Mike, ez spoke by th' ole man, or William, ez I wuz allways noted by my mother. I wore raised in Georgy an' my wife she wore bawn in Allabammah. I jus' reckin' I'm what you calls a *Suth'ner.*"

A smile played on the faces of the three women. Mrs. Winthrop noticed that the man did not speak of his mother as "the old woman," and straightway believed in him. She said quietly "I shall call you William."

Having such opposite strains to contend with in William's creation, Nature had apparently

compromised by giving him characteristics of each. Through the coppery skin of his keen intelligent face shining freckles appeared. They seemed to have rusted through from the inside. His hair was inky black, but straight and bristling. His eyes were blue as the sky above him. His thin, mobile lips and well set chin gave no hint of his negro blood. His rather slender frame sagged unevenly into an amplitude of shoes. This gave him the appearance of being out of drawing.

"Its plain to see," June spoke in an aside to Mrs. Knowles, "that the man's negro blood runs by the way of Cork."

As they crossed the patio Mrs. Knowles remarked upon the beauty of the day. The weather was as favorite a topic with her, as was the fox with the old fabulists.

No one replied. Then William spoke up. " 'Tis a fine day, to be sho'. Th' good Lord's freezin' all th' folks back East so they'll be 'bliged to come out heah."

With a deferential bow William opened a

door.

"If I should rent this bungalow, William, would you work for us?"

"I reck'n so." Then, as if seized with a sudden fear, he quickly asked, "You-all ain't frum Noo Englan', is you?"

"To be sure we are." Mrs. Winthrop spoke with emphasis.

"Whales!" William exclaimed, "I wuk'd onct for Noo Englan' folks. My Lord, but they wore teejus!"

Mrs. Knowles laughed out gaily. This seemed to give William courage.

"But you-all do seem right plesunt—I'm willin' to give you a trial."

"Very well," said Mrs. Winthrop a little stiffly. "You'll try us and we'll try you. I forgot to inquire what wages you want. Perhaps we can't afford to have you."

"Forty dollar a month an' find myself," William answered promptly.

"That is satisfactory, you may come."

"What shall we do about laundry?"

said June, who had a turn for details. "There seem to be no tubs."

"I reck'n my wife might 'commodate you," said William. "I don't say it for sho'. You-all jus' bettah call roun' an see. My wife she's purty pertickler who she wuks for. She nevah kin for'git ez her folks wore slaves to one o' th' best famblys o' th' South. Ef you do goes, don't tell 'er ez I eggvised you to go. Jus' say I thot ez how hit wore doubtfu' an' I reckon she'll do't.'

William's tone was reassuring.

"Very well, William, now do you know of a cook?"

Mrs. Knowles answered the question put to William. "There's no trouble about a cook, all you need to do is to go to a—Japanese agency."

"Then I think everything is settled," Mrs. Winthrop appealed to June: "Do you think we could be ready to move by day after tomorrow?"

June nodded. Her mind for the moment was

busy trying to place the driver.

When they got out of the carriage at the hotel the driver handed Mrs. Knowles a card—"Here is my phone number and address," he said, "perhaps you will let me drive you again."

June started. This time she felt certain she knew where she had heard the voice.

"What is that man's name?" she asked Mrs. Knowles, as they turned to go up the walk.

"Dodge," Mrs. Knowles answered. She looked down at the card in her hand—"Franklin G. Dodge."

XI

AT least one dark cloud which hung over June, was dissipated. Dick, the bell-boy, was discharged almost as soon as he was arrested. His arrest had been a precautionary measure. A slight suspicion fell on him because he had gone to the Mansfield room late, the night of the burglary, with ice water, just as Mrs. Mansfield was putting away some of the gems.

There is no antidote in the world for trouble

equal to that of packing trunks. One may be love sick or financially embarrassed, the truth remains: a certain number of things must be put in a given space, and to do it demands one's whole mind.

June had just finished packing two as the clock struck eleven in the morning. It was the hour set for moving into the new home. Handbags and paper boxes were piled up on the seats of the two carriages. In one, Mrs. Winthrop and June were visible in patches. In the other, occasional glimpses were to be had of the Major and Mrs. Knowles.

Mrs. Knowles was greatly disturbed. June insisted that Dodge, "the Harvard man" should not drive either family. She would give no reason and Mrs. Knowles was allowed to put her own interpretation upon the matter.

When the Winthrops opened the door of their bungalow, they were greeted by a bright fire on the hearth and there were roses in a bowl on the table.

"How thoughtful of William," said Mrs.

Winthrop, "I believe he will prove a treasure."

"It's all just perfect," June exclaimed. She made a little tour of inspection about the room. They removed their wraps and Mrs. Winthrop seated herself before the fire. But she was not long left to her ease.

"Come, mother dear!" June urged with feigned cheerfulness. She took her hand and tugged at her, as she used to do when a child. "Let's explore!"

Arm in arm they walked through the French doors out into the patio.

Startled at their approach, the humming-birds left the pendant fuchsia blossoms. Like elfin arrows they darted through the air. Saucy mocking birds perched on the top of the cypress-trees almost burst their little throats. They were indignant at these intruders. Palms cast their alluring shade. The whole place breathed of repose.

The courtyard gate clicked. A young man stepped inside. Evidently he too was bent on discovery. For a moment the vines hid his

"Stepping toward them, he said confusedly, 'Have I the honor of guest?'"

face. He brushed them aside and said confusedly, "Have I the honor of guests?" The man was George Oliver.

June stood as if rooted to the spot. Her cheeks flamed.

"Guests!" Mrs. Winthrop repeated in astonishment. She did not turn to look at June,—"I believe the honor is *ours*. We have rented this house."

"Then there has been some misunderstanding, —the color had left Oliver's face—I have rented it too—from Page and Page—I came in with my servant this morning."

"Oh! we rented from Storrow and Company," said Mrs. Winthrop.

"That explains it all," said Oliver. He seemed relieved that the matter had been solved. "The bungalow must have been listed with both firms. They neglected to notify each other of the rental. I see now why I had so much difficulty with the gardener in charge. He insisted that he expected two ladies." As he finished speaking Oliver looked at June. He was met by a freez-

ing glance. Very much discomforted he turned to her mother. "You will remain, of course."

"But you are already in possession."

"It was simply an experiment on my part. I thought I wanted—to be quiet—and—" He did not finish the sentence. "I've begun to have doubts of my ability to run an establishment. The place is yours. I surrender it with pleasure," Oliver bowed. "If you will allow me, I will go inside and speak to my servant—my luggage, fortunately, has not yet arrived."

They could see the Japanese boy seated by the kitchen table. He was making out a list of groceries in the picturesque characters of his own language.

Shortly Oliver and his servant took their leave.

June had not moved or spoken.

William came out of the garden. He peered in through one of the arches of the patio—"So that gentleman did belong to you-all! Whales hit's lucky I let 'im in!"

June and her mother had gone back into the

living room and were sitting before the fire.

Mrs. Winthrop broke the silence. "I can not imagine why Mr. Oliver would think of taking a house. And this is such an out-of-the-way place for a man."

"He said he wanted to be quiet," June controlled her voice with difficulty.

"Daughter'—the lines about Mrs. Winthrop's mouth were tense. "I think I have the right to know what the trouble has been between you and Mr. Oliver."

Her mother's words were like the thrust of a lance, which for the moment June was unable to parry.

"Mother"—June hesitated—the fire made a play of light and shade on her strained face—"I know it seems strange to you—unnatural perhaps, that I do not tell you—everything. But *don't* feel hurt, I beg of you! Wait—wait just a little longer! Something dreadful has happened, but there are things I must know for certain before I speak. It is a case of life and death almost, to me and to others. Trust me,

just a little longer—until I can hear—from Jack."

"It must be something dreadful if you cannot tell your mother." But Mrs. Winthrop's austere face softened as she read the pain in June's. "I will wait," she said calmly—"until you choose to tell me."

XII

EACH morning June was to work in the garden for an hour. Those were the doctor's instructions.

William was as happy as if he had been given a holiday, for he was now sure of an audience. "What you need, Miss June, is *stimulation.*"

It was the first morning June had joined him in the garden.

"Now th' place to git it is out o 'th' groun'.

Folks ez comes out heah for their health sets in th' house too much a-readin' books an' don't git no 'speriences of their own. You nevah'll bow up on what other folk's done in books." He turned his head and looked at June intently. "I reck'n a little burnt wisky ud do you good. Hit *all*ways helps me no matter what's the mattah."

"You ain't gittin' a bone fellun, is you, Miss June?" William had just spaded up a toad.

"I hope not, William."

"Ef you is—I'll save this toad an' bind it on."

"Alive!" June cried in horror.

"To be sho! Onct I had a bone fellun an' I boun' on a live toad an' it tuck all th' information out."

June bore down hard on the handle of her small spade. She was trying to break up the ground for a mignonette bed. Mrs. Knowles drove past for the fourth time that morning. June saw her for the first time, but she had not escaped William's watchful eyes.

"Hit's a pity you' frien' ins't bin bawn a

postman or a mess'nger boy."

"Why? William," June stopped her spading.

"Cause she 'pears to like goin' all th' time. Heaps o' folks like that out heah. They needs a safety wick to tell 'em when steam's low—First you knows they gives out—an' they blames th' climate— You's 'blidged to dig that little deeper, Miss June." William's tone was important. "When you dunno jus' how to wuk—jus' throw you' eye my terreckshun an' you'll see."

"Very well, William," June thrust her spade in deeper.

"I reck'n you an' me'll git on purty well gard'nin t'gether, Miss June—cause you don't fluster me. You see I doos heart-wuk in th' flowus—I loves 'em. An' I can't do nothin' when I'm flustered. Thar's a big diff'runce 'tween heart-wuk and han-wuk. You'll find out. Flowus c'n tell th' diff'runce. When you does heart-wuk th' flowus gits to be you' kinfolks. They's mo' reliabler'n *real* kinfolks tho' I nevah

monkeys with real kinfolks. Whales alive! they'll *do* you sho'."

"Where did you work before you came here?" June asked; as much for an excuse to keep William talking as anything else.

"Oh, I wukked for one o' th' billyonaires on th' avanu'—he'll die presuntly—won't need nobody to wuk for 'im nohow." William's tone was cheerful. June looked up. "You knows, Miss June, rich folks lives shorter 'n po' ones."

"No, I didn't know it, William."

"Don't you know how rich folks doos, Miss June? W'y they wuks an' wurrits night an' day a-gatherin' gold—'n when they gits it they lets it out'n vestermunts an fine hosses an' fine *carr*idges an' orter*mow*bils—an' they wurrits an' wurrits night an' day a-fearin' hit'll roll clean 'way frum em. At last they gits out o' breath an' falls dead. My billyonaire's topplin' a'ready—he'll soon be down. He hath swallered down riches an' he shall vomit 'em up agin—that's what th' Bibul sez. He's goin' 'gin natcher, Miss June. Nobody can't 'ford to do it

—I don't care how rich he is! Rich folks knows ef they'd plant trees an' not water 'em, they'd die—but they nevah gives their souls a single drop!"

The handle of June's spade was loose. William tightened it.

"Hits a quare thing—but William's lived a long time—I can't jus' say how long—hit wore writ down in th' Bibul—but mother went housecleanin' an' our house bu'n'd up. Least-ways I's *all*ways obswerved that folks ez looks aftah their gardins looks aftah their souls. You don't nevah see disrespectabul folks a-nursin' flowus. When folks is weedin' their gardins, Miss June, they's likely to be pluckin' envy an' discontent out of their souls."

June was listening attentively.

Suddenly William changed his subject. "I met you' young man down town early this mawnin' a-ridin' in a fine orter*mow*bil an' he smile jus' ez plesunt ez ef I'd bin one o' these patent medacin' presidents. An' he slow down kinder suddint en sezee 'How's you, William?' An' sez I

'Well, thanks you, an' th' young lady's improvin', thanks you.' "

"Oh, William!" June cried in dismay. "What made you mention me?"

"William knows human natcher, Miss June, I knows he didn't want to know nothin' 'bout po' ole William—'Any telefone up to you' house?' sezee, 'I didn't stay long 'nough to find out.' 'Yasser,' sez I, 'I see Miss June a-telefonin'.' He jus' take a little book out o' 'is pocket an' he ask 'What kind a telefone.' I tole 'im hit wore a mighty nice silver'd one ez sets on a table—an' he kin' o' laugh—I didn' see nothin' funny—an' he want to know 'Is hit a Home-fone or a Sunset-fone?' 'My Lord!' sez I, 'w'y don't you try th' front do'? You'll git mo' satifackshun out of it.' An' he thanks me mos' polite an go off.— Th' oil-roads roun' heah sho' is fine, Miss June. You'd jus' bettah keep kin' o' closte home for a day or two, you might git 'vited to 'spect 'em."

"William," June tried to be very severe, "don't you ever mention that man to me, or

speak to him again of me as long as you live."

"I don't mean no 'fence, Miss June, but you sho' can't git roun' this country an' *see* nothin' 'less you's got wheels o' some kind. Ef I wore you I wouldn't negleck my resources—hit don't pay."

There was a pleasant sound in William's throat like the gurgling of water over stones.

Mrs. Winthrop came into the garden, and beckoned to June. When they had taken seats in the summer-house she said, "What am I going to do with the cook—Hara. I ordered a leg of mutton for tomorrow. It just came. Hara declares he won't cook it on Sunday. He says it will keep till Monday and I must get chickens. He says he won't cook anything but chickens for Sunday, and he must have them right away to prepare them."

"I'm sure, mother, I don't know what you can do, unless you humor him."

"Or send him away! On the whole, though, he's too valuable to lose. But how am I to get chickens here within an hour?"

"I'll tell you! Call up Mrs. Knowles. This is her day to have a carriage. She has been past several times. She may be at the house now. Ask her if she won't drive you down street.

"I believe I will."

Mrs. Winthrop hurried to the telephone. Yes, Mrs. Knowles had just driven up— She would be right over.

As Mrs. Knowles and Mrs. Winthrop entered the market, a ruddy-faced, white-aproned young fellow stepped forward to wait upon them.

"I would like some nice chickens," Mrs. Winthrop said in her usual low voice.

The boy thought she was deaf. "Local?" he asked, in a loud tone.

"Local!" Mrs. Winthrop echoed faintly.

Still sure that his customer was hard of hearing, the boy shouted, "Do you want *local* hens madam?"

Mrs. Winthrop glanced appealingly at Mrs. Knowles. With a touch of severity, Mrs. Knowles said, "Will you kindly tell us what you mean by *local hens?*"

"Oh, I see! you're toorists, ain't ye? A *local* hen, ladies, is one raised hereabouts, not a cold storage Easterner—embalmed—some folks call 'em—they'er cheaper 'n locals."

Mrs. Knowles turned away with a motion of disgust.

Mrs. Winthrop shuddered—then, swallowing hard, she said— "You may pick me out two nice *locals*." She gave her address.

As they left the shop Mrs. Winthrop spied a grocer's across the street. "Oh, do see those nice strawberries and green peas! Let's get some."

"How much are those peas a peck?" she pointed at the box with her umbrella. Though it was only foggy she thought it was going to rain.

The clerk eyed the umbrella. "A tenderfoot!" he said to himself. "We don't sell 'em by the peck, madam,—by the pound."

Mrs. Winthrop was nonplused. "I'll take—I'll take ten pounds, please."

"Big family, hav'n't you?" the clerk laughed.

"Not at all!" said Mrs. Winthrop decidedly.

"Ten pounds is an awful lot!" The clerk began weighing them out, piling them higher and higher on the scales.

"I think *three* pounds will do!" Mrs. Winthrop finally said. Even then she was astonished at the size of the package.

"How much are they?"

"Two bits!" the clerk said flippantly, as if the price were not worth mentioning.

"That means twenty-five cents," Mrs. Knowles explained in a patronizing tone.

"Anything else I can do for you?" the man asked — "butter — eggs — sugar—oranges—spuds—very nice today."

"I don't believe I know what kind of a fruit a 'spud' is," Mrs. Winthrop acknowledged.

"Spuds"—the corner of the man's mouth twitched—"are potatoes. We sell 'em by the pound—same as peas."

With the package of peas still in mind, Mrs. Winthrop said; "I'll take three pounds."

The man weighed out seven potatoes.

On their way home they stopped at the hotel

to make a short call on some friends. There they heard the latest news in regard to the burglary: the officers had a new clue, and were now on the trail of a man who had been seen in the garden on the evening that the Mansfields were robbed.

Mrs. Winthrop casually repeated what she had heard to June without the least idea that the information was of any importance to her.

XIII

JUNE was late in coming into the garden. "Mawnin', Miss June," William looked at her reproachfully, "you wore so late I reck'n'd maybe you'd giv'n up you' gardenin' t'day."

"No, but I didn't sleep well," June walked slowly and sank down on a garden seat. A shadow passed over her face.

"I's fear'd, Miss June, you's worritin' 'bout you'se'f—William sees—don't you do hit! You

can't 'ford it. You's going to be *all right.*" William spoke with assurance. "Ef you don't git well presently you's gotter climb ovah a mount'n o' my prayers to keep sick."

"Do you pray for *me,* William?"

"Sho' I doos! Ev'ry night William gets on 'is knees an' ask th' Lord to bless th' blue hen's chick'n."

"Bless what, William?"

"The blue hen's chick'n," William repeated. He waited a moment, then glanced up at June from the geranium bed. "God an' me knows who 'tis." In a confidential tone, he continued — "Ef you'd like to be in th' seekrit, Miss June"—he turned his head to one side, then to the other, scrutinizing his work—"hit's a very plesunt young lady here 'bouts. Some folks calls 'er 'Miss June' an' some folks calls 'er 'Miss Winthrop'."

"But I can't imagine why you call me "the blue hen's chicken, William." There was tenderness in June's voice.

"Hit's jus' th' nicest name I knows. You-all

don't hear nothin' in Bawston, doos you? Well —way down in th' south o' Georgy thar wuz an ole man ez wore rais'n thousan's o' chick'ns. One mawnin' he wen't out an' one wore blue. Ev'ry mawnin' aftah that when he look out' early, he see th' blue chick'n up a-gittin' hit's breakfust an' hit growed twicet ez fast ez th' yuthers an' wuz th' finest chick'n you evah see —an' smaht—whales alive! folks come frum all roun' to see that chick'n. One day the ole man couldn' find 'er nowhars. Bimeby didn't she come a-wakkin' in th' yhd with a duzzun blue chic'ns. Folks wus jus' wild! an' they want'd to buy 'em an' that ole man he mos' git rich a-sellin' th' chick'ns of th' blue hen. He sole em an' sole em an' they wore so *smaht an' han'some*— When folks down thar want to say sump'n awful nice 'bout you, they say you wore a 'blue hen's chick'n.' An' that's what I calls jus' th' nicest young lady I knows!"

June's eyes filled with tears.

" 'Pears like ev'rythin' got dew on it this mawnin'." William put on a very innocent look.

"Th' climates a-changin' out heah. Hit's damper'n it use to be—so many toorist comin' all th' time—they brings 'lecktric'ty an' it gits into th' airs."

June laughed. "Sun's comin' out all right!" William gave a furtive glance at June.

She rose and went to the tool-house for her rake. "How could tourists bring electricity, William?" she asked, when she came back.

"Well, they doos," William insisted, sho' they doos! An' ev'ry wintah they brings th' grip—whales! in th' ole Spannich days thar nevah wuz no 'flewenzah—toorist brings it all!"

"Why William, you make out the tourists to be dreadful people!" June put on an offended air. "They bring a lot of things beside electricity and influenza, don't they. How about money, for instance?"

"Sho', Miss June, I ain't con*dam*in' 'em. I knows th' country wouldn't be nothin' 'thout 'em—an' its good for we-all that they comes. Couldn't nobody find nuther country like this tho! Hits a reg'ler 'partment sto'. You kin find

jus' ennythin' you wants. Yonder's th' sea!" William pointed in its direction, "an' yonder's th' mount'ns!" he reversed his spade handle. "Heah's roses—an' thar's snow!" He indicated the garden and the mountain tops. "Ev'rythin' out heah ceptin' young men, Miss June, an' they's scurser'n hen's teeth!—that's w'y I didn' want you to fall down on you' resours'ts. When a nice Eastern genterman come along, you bettah jus' pluck 'im!"

"I didn't come out here for a husband, William," June said rather crossly.

"Sho' you didn', Miss June—but ef you'd git hit by a love-arrow you couldn' help you'se'f nohow."

"I don't believe," June said by way of turning the conversation, "that these rose-slips are going to grow. The ground's too hard."

"You's right 'bout one thing, Miss June, *all*ways 'spect th' wust an' ef hit don't happun you's jus' that much 'head. *I* thinks th' slips'll grow, but ef they don't you jus' keep on a-tryin'. Folks ez don't try for nothin' in this world ain't good

for nothin'. Wuk—but don't wurrits! I nevah wurrits 'bout nothin' nohow less I knows hit's goin' to happun 'forehand. Jus' make a kite o' care an' fly it 'bove you' head ez high ez you kin."—

William was spading a little strip of ground just outside the courtyard. June wanted to fill up a bare spot.

"S'posin' we plant a row o' callas under th' arch, Miss June, they'd come in handy in case of a weddin'."

"Oh, mercy!" June exclaimed, "they are more suggestive of funerals to me. I wouldn't have one on the place for worlds."

"Now ain't that quare! My Lord! that's jus' th' way I feels 'bout white shoes. Enny jeckshun to my puttin' Easter lilies in thar?"

"Oh no, William."

William's thoughts went back to the callas. "I ain't nevah see many dead ladies, but them ez I *did* see *all*-ways wore white shoes— But we ain't goin' to have no fewnerals— You's th' only likely one, Miss June, an ef you keeps on

a-gard'nin', you'll cheat th' groun' o' yo' presunts by a-wukkin' in it." William chuckled.

June made no reply, but gave a slight shiver.

William was quick to see that he had made a mistake— "You ain't sick nohow, Miss June," he said diplomatically, "You's jus' mildood a little. You's jus' lately bin transplant'd frum Massjoosuts. Folks is like flowus—transplant'n 'em wilts 'em. Don't 'spect too much o' nothin' til hits tuck'n root. When I fust come heah from Georgy this soil did'n seem to 'gree with me. I had ammonya an' I had casterd oil. My Lord! I jus' thot th'd kill me—but I git rooted onct mo'!"

The postman whistled, down the street. June went quickly toward the gate.

"You ain't finished, is you, Miss June?"

"No William—her eyes were toward the street, "but I want to get the mail."

June met the postman as he came round the corner. He held a solitary letter in his hand. Of course it would be from Jack! She took it—looked at the address—turned it over—scruti-

nized the back. In evident despair, she sat down on a big stone at the corner of a flower-bed.

The letter which she held was her own letter to Jack—but—addressed to *Boston* instead of New York City! In the upper left-hand corner she had written her name and the hotel address. Now it had come back to her, after all these days of waiting! She covered her face with her hands, and tried to think.

"I'll 'scuse you frum gard'nin enny mo' this mawnin', Miss June." William called out. "You jus' go in th' house an' read you' Bibul an' rest a wile."

June rushed to her room, and put Jack's letter in a new envelope this time addressed to New York City. She also added a note, telling him of everything that had happened since she first wrote, and begging him to advise her in detail just what to do.

After dinner June took up the evening paper and read, in a column devoted to news of the hotel—which she and her mother had just left—

"A carriage driver by the name of Franklin Dodge has on several occasions been seen loitering about the hotel gardens. He was seen there on the night of the Mansfield robbery, and is no doubt, the much wanted man. But so far it has been impossible to locate him."

XIV

MRS. KNOWLES had dropped in early. Something was evidently on her mind. She sat in the patio with June and Mrs. Winthrop. "I want to know," she began, "whether you both saw that dreadful thing in 'The Evening News' about Franklin Dodge?"

Mrs. Winthrop said "yes," and June moved her head in the affirmative.

"I think it's an outrage!" Mrs. Knowles

took off her wraps. "The very idea! why, he's one of the nicest men I ever knew in my life. I phoned down to the hotel this morning and told them just what I thought of such proceedings. But the clerk laughed and said he guessed Dodge was the man all right, if he could be found. Found indeed! He's probably driving around the corner,—but when he is found, Major Knowles is going to see that he has bail—or anything else of which he is in need."

It was time for June to go to her gardening, but she still sat there. "Have you heard," she asked Mrs. Knowles, "whether any one else is implicated with Dodge?"

"No, I've heard nothing, only what I read in the paper last night, and what the hotel clerk told me this morning. That was more than I wanted to hear. And such a time as I've been having with help, too! I should like," she continued fairly out of breath, "to have the people who don't believe in a war with Japan, just go through one engagement with Toki, my cook."

Mrs. Winthrop looked just sympathetic

enough to be polite.

There was a saucy twinkle in June's eye in spite of the weight on her heart as she asked. "What is the trouble, Mrs. Knowles?"

"Well!" Mrs. Knowles leaned back in her chair to make herself more comfortable, "you know I always prefer to do my own ordering. Yesterday morning Toki heard me telephoning for macaroni. He made a terrible clatter, droping a pan he was washing, and rushed into the telephone room saying, 'You get please *line bran!*' I hadn't the slightest idea what he meant. I had to ask him over several times and every time he said *'line bran.'* I couldn't make head or tail out of it. Then of course the girl at the phone got angry, because I kept her waiting so long, and while she kept saying 'What is it, lady?' in one ear, Toki was shouting 'line bran' in the other. Finally Toki let out such a roar that I dropped the receiver— Then it all came over me— Toki was roaring like a lion, to show me that it was the Lion Brand of macaroni that he wanted." Mrs. Knowles reached

out and broke off a sprig of heliotrope. "Then of course," she took a long sniff at the flowers, "I had an *awful* time getting the number again. But that wasn't the end of it." Her face flushed. "A couple of hours later I happened to be in the kitchen, as the groceries were brought in. When Toki saw his Lion Brand of macaroni, his face beamed and he thanked me 'so many' as he always says it—when he looked at the bill, his face fell. 'You pay too high!' "— Mrs. Knowles tried to speak like a Japanese boy. She fanned herself with her handkerchief— "And then I found that he was objecting to the fact that I had been charged twenty cents a package straight, in place of two for thirty-five, as he had been in the habit of getting it. Now what do you think?" Mrs. Knowles raised her voice. "We expected company for luncheon and Toki refused to make croquettes out of that macaroni! because it cost too much—and nothing I could say would budge him an inch. So there was nothing for me to do, but to order a carriage and go down town and take that macaroni back.

When I got there, the grocer said macaroni had gone up, but I gave the boy that waited on me a tip to mark the package 'two for thirty-five'—and that carriage cost me a dollar and a half!"

"But why," June asked, "didn't you just pretend to Toki, that you were going down town, and mark the price yourself?"

Mrs. Knowles' face fell. "My dears!" she said, looking blankly from June to her mother, "I never once thought of it!"

After this blow Mrs. Knowles relapsed into silence. She soon recovered, however. "Did I tell you," she spoke as if she had something very important to communicate, "that we've found five holes in the coffee-pot? and we haven't but one cooking fork to our name! Think of it! We're paying five hundred dollars a month!—a *hundred dollars* for every hole in that coffee pot!"

Mrs. Winthrop looked at June as if to say, "What can one reply to such nonsense?"

"According to your reckoning, Mrs. Knowles," June interposed, "you're not paying

anything for the cooking fork."

"Well, I should say I *am*. It takes half of Toki's time to wash that fork, when he's cooking, and I pay him forty dollars a month."

"I suppose," June tantalized, "that if one could only suggest to themselves that everything is all right, it would help."

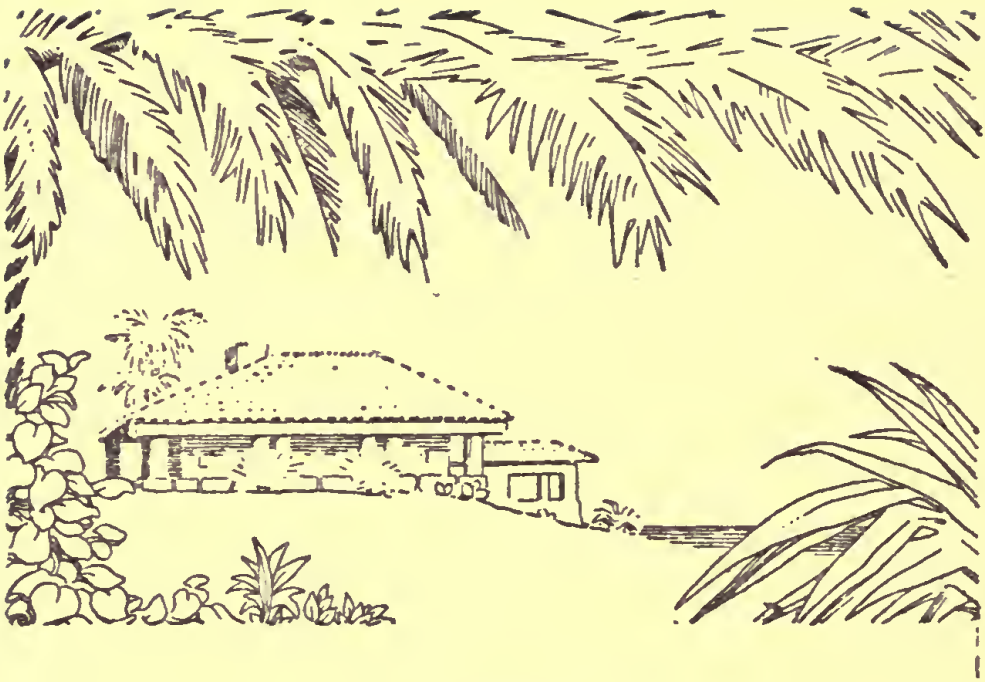
Mrs. Winthrop shook her head reprovingly at June. Mrs. Knowles took the girl seriously. "It's all very well, my dears, when one's ill or in disgrace but there are two things to which—in my belief—mental science does not apply—rented houses and sons of Nippon. It was intended for simply ordinary things."

Mrs. Knowles dropped her double chin, which signified that the discussion was ended as far as she was concerned. She rose to go.

"It's too late to go to work now, mother," June picked up her garden hat, "but I'm just going out to talk with William a little while. He's so funny he keeps me cheered up."

William had caught sight of Mrs. Knowles as she crossed the patio. When June appeared,

he said "I's bin waitin' for you' frien' to go. She look kin o' flusttud this mawnin'. I reck'n she love trubbul like a priest love a parrot! Speaking 'bout trubbul, Miss June, my wife's ailin' turribul," William stopped his work. "She's failin' fast, I's fear'd—co'se we ain't *all*-ways hitch'd—I worn't quite stylish 'nough for 'er—but now she's tuck'n sick, I 'pears to jus' suit 'er an' she clings to me jus' like a wiltin' vine to a ole post."



XV

ON the following morning William did not appear at the usual time. Mrs. Winthrop called Hara to lay the fire in the living room and to perform other small duties which belonged to William. June asked him to sweep the court-yard. This was the signal for open rebellion. "Too much work here! I find you strong boy!"

Word was brought from William that his wife had died during the night. Mrs. Win-

throp and June were deep in conversation over William's affairs. Hara saw his opportunity. He dropped his work "My cousin very sick. I just hear last night." He went to his room to pack.

Mrs. Knowles put in an appearance inopportunely. She was absorbed in her own affairs. "I am going to pay my social debts," she said, "and I came to ask your advice." They were sitting in the living room. Mrs. Knowles had made herself comfortable on the Davenport with a big pillow at her back. "First, who am I to invite?" Like the majority of people who ask advice, Mrs. Knowles really did not care for it. "I believe I shall be obliged to have *three* parties"—she looked troubled—one for my Episcopalian friends—one for the Presbyterians—I might include the Congregationalists and Baptists and Methodists there, possibly—and one for my friends—well,—who are more advanced in religious thought."

Mrs. Winthrop's New England backbone stiffened. "I never heard of such a thing in all my

life!"

"Well, you see, while one church is as good as another, they have very different ideas about entertainment. Now, I thought of having a Bridge party for the Episcopalians—they go in more for style than the others—and of course Bridge is *the* thing now." Mrs. Knowles adjusted the pillow at her back. She was a trifle disconcerted by Mrs. Winthrop's unsympathetic attitude. But not for long. "The churches that don't altogether approve of cards, compromise, you know, by saying, 'Oh, I only play a little Five Hundred!' " She tossed the last sentence off with a shrug. "So I thought I'd give a Five Hundred party for *them.*"

June wore a whimsical smile and kept watch of her mother.

"For my own dear progressive friends, who have their minds on higher things"—Mrs. Knowles took on an air of superiority—"I thought of having a tea!"

"But, Mrs. Knowles, you play Bridge a great deal yourself, don't you?" asked June, by way of

bringing her out of the clouds.

"Yes, I do," she hesitated, "I am sorry to say, I haven't yet reached a plane where I can overcome the temptation to play a good game."

There was a loud call at the kitchen door. "Veg—ee—tubbles!"

June ran off to interview the Chinaman. As she was returning to Mrs. Knowles and the consideration of her "functions," she spied William coming through the courtyard. At first, she hardly recognized him. He was dressed in new and shining black.

"My wife's gone, Miss June!" he said in a hollow voice, as he came toward her.

"I'm sorry, William, very sorry. Can I do anything for you?"

"I dunnó ez you kin, Miss June, maybe you'd save me some white flowus for t'morrow. She *'specta* to be buried t'morrow. My Lord!—I hopes when *I* dies, I won't be tuck'n to th' cream'ry—th' groun's good 'nough for me. When my wife's buried, I'd like to have ev'rythin' ez stylish ez poss'bul. My wife *all*ways laid

great sto' on bein' stylish." William looked down at himself. "Doos you think I'm dress' suitabul, Miss June?"

"Yes, perfectly so, William."

"I'd jus' hate to wear ennythin' ez would'n' be my wife's tast'," William looked way off into space. "I kin see now ef I'd a humor'd my wife 'bout things when she wuz livin' like I have sence she's dead, I could a made hit a heap plesunter for 'er. I'm sorry 'bout leavin my wuk this mawnin'. Maybe Hara'll do hit for me."

"Hara's going."

"My daddy! whar's he goin' to?"

"I don't know, I asked him to sweep the courtyard, and he immediately said his cousin was sick and that he had to go."

"I bet that woren't th' real reason. Ef th' Lord don't hit Hara wid his trufe, he'll jus' go on a-varigatin' til th' end o' time. You knows little varigashuns is like th' seed of an ugly weed an' ev'ry time you repeats 'em they springs up —hit's jus' ez ef you puts water on 'em—

fin'lly that ole weed gits to thrivin' til you can't pull it—to save you' life! Whar is Hara?"

"He went to pack up," June answered.

"I'll find 'im."

Hara, with his suit case in hand, was in the kitchen taking a drink of water. William came in and closed the door. "Hara you's wicked! Miss June's delicat' an' 'er mother's easy oppset. You's varigatin' 'bout you' cuzzun. What you reck'n th' Lord's goin to do wid you?"

Hara edged toward the door.

"Hara, you's bound to pray wid me." He took the astonished Hara by the hand and led him to a chair. He knelt down. Hara hesitated, but the grip on his arm was tight. He finally knelt. Hara had just mopped the floor in an impressionistic manner, preparatory to leaving, and in his haste had left little puddles here and there. Into one of these the knees of his best blacks settled clammily.

William began. "Oh Lord, break up th' folly groun' in Hara's haht to-day. Po' out his gall 'pon th' ground an' whar hit fall plant seeds

o' trufe an' make 'em spring up on high so ez Hara'll lose his se'f in th' flowus o' trufe an' nevah tell no mo' lies. Hara ain't got no sick cuzzon—you knows he ain't. Make 'im to stay an' take care o' my ladies. William knows th' ole one's teejus but I reck'n you made 'er so an' she can't help it. She mean right, sh' she doos an—"

Hara's knees were thoroughly soaked by this time and he was willing to concede anything if William would only stop praying. "I stay," he said meekly.

"Amen! Praise th' Lord!" cried William.

When they were on their feet, Hara coughed to make William think he had taken cold.

William produced a flask from his hip pocket. Holding it out to Hara, he said, "Take a nip!"

Hara shook his head. His eyelids seemed to move from below like a chicken's. "No, I Christian."

William knocked at the door of the living room. On being answered, he thrust his head

in. "He'll stay!"

"How about the sick cousin?" Mrs. Winthrop asked.

"Whales! He ain't got no sick cuzzun."—then in a confidential tone—"I tell you-all sump'n bout Hara. I don't zactly like to call 'im an out'n out'n liar—hit don't soun' jus' Christyun"—he hesitated—"but—Hara doos remain mostly in th' subu'bs o' trufe."

The Major called to go home with his wife. He had been down town and heard the latest news: "They've located poor Dodge", he said, "he's sick in the hospital and unconscious. I went around there, left my address, and told them the moment Dodge was conscious to send for me. The whole business is diabolical," the Major thundered.

XVI

THE Major persuaded his wife to postpone her sectarian functions in order that they might take a trip up the coast, as far as San Francisco, while the country was looking its best. June and Mrs. Winthrop decided to go as well.

The Major, however, did not make his plans until after he had ascertained the exact condition of Dodge. The hospital physician told him there was no possibility of Dodge's recovery for

weeks. But the Major took the precaution of leaving careful instructions just where to wire him in the North.

"There is one thing I want to explain to you ladies," the Major said when they were seated in the train—"I am told that in San Francisco you must never refer to the earthquake, but always to the fire."

"It's just as well to be diplomatic. There are people who pull down hornets nests on their heads and then wonder why they get stung." The Major's glance implicated his wife. She ignored his accusing look. For her it was enough to be going some place.

After a time the sea came into view on one side of the train and high hills rose abruptly on the other.

As they sped along June experienced a sense of relief, like a frightened bird that puts distance between itself and the thing it shuns.

The picture without grew constantly more beautiful. Now the hills were gorgeous with

wild flowers. There were all the hues of the rainbow. Fleecy white clouds drifted in from the horizon, softened the color of the sea and floated over the hilltops.

"I don't believe there's another ride in the world equal to this," the Major said enthusiastically. The journey, of a sudden, suggested an idea to him—"I wonder where Oliver's gone!" he looked at the Winthrops across the aisle. Major Knowles had never taken the trouble between June and Oliver seriously. Mrs. Knowles pressed the Major's foot with her own, but he continued—"I went down to the hotel last night to see if he would look after Dodge while I'm away, but the clerk said he'd gone off on a little trip."

June got up abruptly and announced that she was going to the observation car.

"I told you!" Mrs. Knowles whispered in the Major's ear.

"Told me! You told me nothing— You only stepped on my foot."

It had long been dark when they arrived at

San Francisco. As they drove through beautiful, brilliantly lighted streets and stopped before a magnificent hotel, Mrs. Winthrop fairly caught her breath— "Why, I never expected anything like this!"

"You thought you were going to drive over piles of debris to a makeshift hotel didn't you?" the Major said as he assisted the ladies out of the carriage.

"Not exactly—but in spite of all that I've read, I wasn't prepared for what I see."

Later, the Winthrops stood before the window of their room, looking out on the city and the bay in the distance. Myriads of electric lights in every direction—including the illumination on the vessels pierced the darkness and gave the impression of an inverted star-lit sky.

"I've always heard," June said delighting in the picture, "that this is one of the most beautiful cities in the world by night."

The Major and his wife tapped on the Winthrop's door next morning. They were all going down to breakfast together.

"I hope you ladies are in fine spirit"—the Major's tone indicated that all was well with him. "First, you must be light hearted and gay when you come to San Francisco, otherwise you're a blot on the landscape; next you must dine—here, there—everywhere."

"No doubt all of the famous cafés we used to hear about were destroyed in the earth—in the fire"—June corrected herself.

"I can't say," the Major was interested, "but we'll find out. I intend to give you ladies the time of your life the next day or two."

After breakfast they made a tour of Chinatown. This was a revelation. No more squalid buildings here! The "hell breath" wiped them out. In their place were fine, modern commercial blocks with the dipped roofs of pagan temples. And such bazaars! One might travel the world over without seeing any half so wonderful.

"Cities are like people," the Major said as they walked along. "They are influenced by heredity and environment the same as we are.

Take this city, for instance! It was bred in romance, courage and hardy adventure, with the best blood of many nations. And look at its enchanting environment," he indicated the sea with a sweep of his arm. "It was impossible to daunt it even by a great calamity."

Mrs. Knowles interrupted her husband's flight—"Major Knowles suppose we go to the theatre tonight." They were just passing one. "Barkis is willin' ", the Major replied, "if it suits the ladies." He turned to the Winthrops.

"How jolly," was June's prompt reply. Mrs. Winthrop nodded and smiled assent.

The Major went in to purchase tickets.

"They're all re-built," he said, as he came out beaming.

"What's rebuilt Major Knowles," there was scorn in his wife's voice, "I believe this climate has gone to your head."

"The old cafés, Maria, I inquired about them at the box office—we'll go to the Poodle Dog after the theatre tonight."

"Will I do?" June laughed as she noticed the Major scrutinizing her costume, when they were waiting for a car, later.

"Do," the Major repeated—"it's heart breaking to think you must waste a lovely frock like that on an old codger like me— But who knows! You may meet your Fate to-night."

They were a little late in arriving at the theatre. The curtain was just going up when they were shown their seats in the center of the house. A brilliant audience awaited in breathless calm the appearance of a notable actress.

Not until the end of the first act did June have an opportunity to take cognizance of anything about her. As the lights came on, she glanced toward the boxes on her right. Involuntarily she grasped the arm of the Major, who sat beside her, as if she felt herself falling into bottomless space. He looked up, startled, under the impression that June was ill. But instantly, before he had time to speak, he too caught sight of George Oliver in one of the boxes. He was with a party of friends, apparently. There were

two other men and three young women in the box. The girl who sat beside Oliver was very beautiful. She was fashionably gowned and wore handsome jewels.

Though the Major was an able tactician, June's whole attitude discomfited him. He cleared his throat the second time and finally said indifferently, "Why there's Oliver!"

Mrs. Winthrop looked nervously toward her daughter. Mrs. Knowles craned her neck in the direction the Major was looking.

June quickly recovered her self-possession, at least outwardly. Her thoughts went back to Franklin Dodge in the hospital. She was filled with rage against Oliver—to think he, the guiltier one, should have run away and left a sick man in such a plight. She watched him furtively between acts. He devoted himself assiduously to the beautiful girl. Oliver, himself, had never looked handsomer. And whenever he spoke June thought she detected a fine shade of sympathy in the girl's face. For the hundredth time June told herself that she hated George

Oliver, and for the hundredth time she knew that it was not true. Since she first met him, she had almost run the gamut of emotions, but jealousy was new to her.

The curtain fell. The Major hurried them along.

"Now for the Poodle Dog!" he said, when they were outside.

"Are we really going there?" June asked with lagging interest.

"To be sure," the Major signalled a car.

"How this reminds me of dear old Paris," Mrs. Knowles remarked with an air of satisfaction, as they entered the café.

"And dear old San Francisco!" the Major supplemented.

It was a gay French place with white paint, paneled walls, and innumerable lights. On a high balcony at one end were the musicians. A man's strong tenor voice rose above a staccato accompaniment and filled the room. Only two tables were left, quite close together in a corner. They took the most desirable one—where the

musicians could be seen.

The Major had just given the order when Oliver, and his friends appeared. He no doubt, saw the Major's party for the first time. His embarrassment was apparent. But there was no alternative. He was obliged to take the remaining table.

The Major and Mrs. Knowles nodded. Oliver returned their nod. When he sat down June could not see his face, but she could see the face of the beautiful girl. A pink flush diffused her cheeks from time to time. And June felt certain Oliver must be paying her very pretty compliments. "If she only knew to what kind of a man she is listening," was June's patronizing mental observation.

June was gay. She told her best stories, listened appreciatively to the Major's, tactfully covered up one or two of Mrs. Knowles' loquacious blunders, and adroitly drew her mother into the talk.

Evidently Oliver made some excuse to his friends, for after a short time he left with them.

As he went out, he looked at June—their eyes met. It was all in a lightning flash. But June could not hold out against his glance. She knew then and there that she would follow George Oliver to the end of the world, if given the chance.

XVII

WHEN June and Mrs. Winthrop arrived at home they found William greatly stirred up over something.

"I sho's glad to see the blue hen's chick'n an' 'er lovely mother. Ef you-all hadn't come home tereckly I'd 'a' had a stroke o' consternation."

"What's the trouble?' asked June.

"Trubbul!" William repeated, "that Jap's bin so 'portant thar wuz no livin' wid 'im. I got

th' rabbit-foot on 'im tho', when I tole 'im ef he didn't stop bein' so bossy I'd jus' go way an' leave 'im all 'lone in his kitchen lane. I's bin a genterman to Hara but he's jus' like a termater vine—he can't stand bein' pomper'd. Ef you treats termaters fine they won't do nothin', but tromp on 'em an' don't water em an' the'll give you fine fruit. *Sho!*"

"I am sure everything will go better now that we are here," Mrs. Winthrop reassured William.

"I tole Hara, you-all wouldn't have no monkey biz-ness. He's *got* my mind so monkey'd up I jus' dunno what t' do. Ef he keep on a-bein' so wicked, he's goin' to git his name in th' noospapah—all wicked folks doos in th' end. Hit knocks th' cover off'n their sins an' shows 'em in a clair light."

Hara came into the living room where they were talking with a tray of coffee and toast—it was yet early morning. He purposely ran into William. Carelessly William remarked, looking in the opposite direction—"Folks as is

slough-footed needs a wide path."

"I reck'n you don't feel like workin' this mawnin', doos you Miss June?" William started for the garden.

"Yes, I'll be there William, as soon as I finish my toast."

"You kin weed th' poppy bed," William said importantly, when June came out. He looked at her quizzically, as he remarked innocently —"I ain't seen nothin' o' th' young man roun' town sence you-all bin 'way."

"What young man are you talking about, William?"

"Why *our* young man—*You'* young man—"

June spoke sharply—"William I told you never to mention his name again."

"I ain't mention no names Miss June—Sho I ain't! These mawnin's crisps folks up!" William laughed. "Hits a good sign though accordean to my thinkin'— Folks ez don't git crisp onct in a while in this worl' is liabul to be angels too soon in th' next. 'Taint human natcher to have a pummanunt disposishun."

June was working diligently.

"You'd jus' bettah be careful, Miss June, them's young poppies you's pickin' out'n place o' weeds."

"I'm afraid I am a little tired after my trip," June admitted, as she looked at the uprooted poppies in dismay.

"You's honest, Miss June. I kin *all*ways jedge folks feelin's by their ambishuns. You kin no mo' do good wuk when you don't feel well 'an you kin put this sunshine in you' pocket. You wuz right to tell William place o' pertendin' you want to stay—an tearin' blankets."

"Tearing blankets?"

"Ain't you nevar heah 'bout tearin' blankets?"

June shook her head.

"Well, onct thar wore an old cullud man down south as lived *all* by hese'f. He wore a a turribul cowahd—an' one night aftah he'd went t' bed long comes a frien' to visit. He ain't see no light so he opens th' do'—the latch wore busted—and he calls out—'Anybody t' home?' My Lord! that old man wore so skeer'd

"It's a good story, William."

he nevah did suspishun a frien'. He didn' dare answer nothin' nowhow but he jus' takes a blanket an' tears hit to let on he's thar an' ain't skeer'd, but he wore. So down south folks says you's tearin' blankets when you's pertendin'—Hit's a little"—William stammered—"like tellin' a lie."

June laughed. "It's a good story, William." She had stopped weeding and sat on the grass under a palm.

"Sho' hits a good story;"—William sighed—many's the time my wife's said to me—"You ain't tearin' blankets is you?"

"I's had a mighty sad 'sperience, Miss June, an' I hopes when *you* marries you'll find some one ez is becomin' to you' disposishum. I loved my wife, but her and me t'gether wore jus' like combinin' these red geranyums an' that megentah collud vine thar! We jus' couldn' match up nohow! I wuz fear'd o' trubbul when I married 'er cause she'd a bin livin' in Injanneh. Hits mo' safeter t' marry folks ez comes frum Georgy. Injanneh folks sho has got quare no-

tions." William was down on his hands and knees weeding. He stood up and looked down at his dirt-stained clothes. "Whales! I looks ez ef I'd a come frum Injanneh myself!"

William did not notice the crimson flush on June's face as she said: "Very smart people come from Indiana, William."

"Whales, they's *smaht* all right—they's *too* smaht! They's *dam* yankees!"

"William, I'm shocked," June tried to look so but her eyes danced with merriment.

"Oh, my Lord! forgives me, forgives me—til I washes my mouf out." William hurried toward a hydrant as fast as his clumsy shoes would let him, and putting his head under the faucet, turned the water into his mouth full force. Appearances indicated that he would have drowned had not June come to the rescue.

"William—William"—she called between fits of laughter—"stop—you'll strangle yourself."

William got up and wiped the water from his face with his coat sleeve. "I reck'n I ain't bin so wet sence I wore baptized," he said, catching

his breath. "Hit woren't propah to swar in you' presence, Miss June, and I's goin' to let my tongue rust 'n my head 'fore I evah do hit no mo'."

"I'll forgive you William," June was still laughing, "but I'm going in now."

She found the evening paper, of the day before, and dropped down on the couch to rest. She glanced over the contents casually. An item arrested her attention:

"Mr. George Oliver, one of the most popular guests of Hotel ——— returned from the North today. He was highly indignant when he learned of the apprehension of Franklin Dodge for the recent burglary. Mr. Oliver says that he is well acquainted with Franklin Dodge, in fact, he defends him as a friend."

XVIII

IT was Sunday morning. The days had multiplied into a fortnight since June had returned her letter to Jack.

Mrs. Knowles called with a carriage to take the Winthrops to church. They were a little early in starting and she directed the driver to stop at the post office.

June went in for the mail. There was nothing except a letter for herself, and that was—from Jack! She did not want her mother to

know of it. So great was her excitement, she came near tearing the letter into bits, just to keep it from being seen. Quickly slipping it into her blouse, she returned to the carriage. "No mail for you, Mrs. Knowles," she said. She felt guilty enough not to mention her own letter.

"It is strange we don't hear anything from Jack!" said Mrs. Winthrop, as they drove off. "I do hope he isn't ill!"

"I hope not." The color mounted to June's cheeks.

"This is a very pious town," Mrs. Knowles said—People were whizzing past in autos and fine carriages, to say nothing of scores of pedestrians— "Now, my dears, even on this lovely day, I venture to say every one of these people are going to church!— They *do* dress a good deal," she added, as if in reply to a possible criticism from Mrs. Winthrop, "but it isn't as though they couldn't afford it."

"I never have approved of opera clothes for church," Mrs. Winthrop spoke with feeling.

June took no part in the conversation. She

was trying to think of a way by which she could manage to read Jack's letter.

The Fates were kind. In this particular church many of the women removed their hats during the service. June wore a creation of lace and pink roses. As she was taking it off, it occurred to her that this was her opportunity. The long prayer began. June quietly slipped Jack's letter out from her blouse and transferred it to the crown of her hat. She pulled out a hat pin, and with eyes cast demurely down, cut the end of the envelope. It was a big, blue one. The color showed through the lace crown of her hat. "Jack would have done me a kindness," she thought, "if he had used a white envelope."

Cautiously she drew out the letter. The church was still, but for the preacher's voice. The paper rattled. June waited a moment. A glance at her mother showed that she was attending strictly to her devotions. Mrs. Knowles looked June's way and thought, "I didn't remember that the crown of June's hat was lined

with blue"—then she dropped her eyes again.

At last June succeeded in unfolding and spreading out the letter. Fortunately Jack wrote a large, clear hand. June's heart beat like a trip-hammer— Probably Jack would advise her to go to the authorities, and make a clean breast of the whole affair— Then she would have to go to court and testify—and her picture would be in the papers! Her hands trembled so, she could scarcely hold the letter. She began to read:

"Dearest Sis: I have just returned from a hurried business trip to the South. I found your letter waiting, inclosing the one misdirected to *Boston*. In Heaven's name! what's the matter with everybody out there? You are right and wrong about George Oliver. He *was* in my class and *did* frequently write me during my long illness"—

"Dear me!"—June listened—"he's got down to the President in his prayer! I must hurry or he'll be saying 'Amen'!"

"I knew that he was going to California. In fact he was in the city shortly before he left, as he told you, but his plan then was to go to Santa Barbara. Sister darlint! George Oliver is trying his wings as a playwright. Because so many Western plays have succeeded, he went out to California for 'local color.' The conversation between the two men in the garden—which you give in your letter—coincides pretty well with a rough sketch Oliver outlined for me before he left. Now Dodge, also of our class, I knew was in Pasadena; but I said nothing about him to mother and you, because he is sick and so down on his luck. I thought it would only embarrass him to meet my family. His health went back on him the year he graduated, and he immediately started West. The doctors said he had to be out of doors. He was all out of money and he wrote me he'd got a public carriage to drive. I'm mighty sorry you've made such a poor beginning, but it's all over now! So don't worry, and get well, dear Sis, even if you die in the attempt— The burglary—of course, that

was only a coincidence— All well-regulated hotels visited by rich tourists have them. Am sending a letter on to Oliver by the same mail as yours, asking him to go and see you. I hope the Saints will forgive me for the tale I've told him, in order to excuse your conduct. Oliver is a fascinating chap. So hold on to your heart-strings, Sis dear! Love to mother.

"Your own

"JACK."

The prayer was ended and so was the letter. During the singing of the hymn, June returned the letter to her blouse.

Very little she had heard of the prayer or the hymn. But in her heart she gave thanks and sang a song of rejoicing. Jack's letter was too good to be true! To think that after all she had not given her love to one unworthy. She almost laughed out in sheer delight. Her face was overflowing with happiness. Mrs. Winthrop saw the change—to her it was unaccountable.

When they were at home June put her arms

about her mother's neck— "Mother, I *did* get a letter from Jack this morning." She then told her everything.

Mrs. Winthrop was momentarily silent. She was appalled when she realized what had been in June's mind for so many days. The thought that gave her some comfort she expressed aloud, with an inflection of relief,— "But it's all over now"—exactly Jack's words. Mrs. Winthrop was seldom demonstrative, but she kissed her daughter tenderly. "The only thing you have to do from now on is to get well," she said.

Bliss has never for long remained unalloyed since the world began. And when June walked in the garden that afternoon, a little green monster took sudden possession of her. It came in the guise of a vision— A vision of the beautiful girl who had sat beside George Oliver in his box at the theatre.

For the first time June failed to find sympathy among the flowers. They did not respond to her mood. "It is because they know naught of fear and jealousy," she thought.

XIX

JUNE was lying in a hammock with a book in her hand. She did not turn the leaves for she was watching a bird just above her head, that was balancing itself on the long, swinging leaf of a palm.

A pretty picture she made out there under the trees. Her white linen frock was set off by the red hammock. The sunbeams played hide-and-go-seek in her hair. The birds fluttered to and fro, in the top of the tree.

June was in a state of perturbation. That morning a note had come from Mr. Oliver asking if he might call—though he neglected to state the time when he wished to do so. And June had sent a formal but favorable reply. What should she say when Mr. Oliver presented himself!— He might come that very afternoon. If she only knew what Jack had said to him in his letter, it would be easier.

William appeared. His rake and shovel made a clatter as he walked.

June sat up in the hammock. "William you've frightened my bird away!"

"My Lord! Miss June, ef I wait ev'ry day for th' birds in this gardin to git thro a-ballunsin theirse'fs 'fore I went to wuk, hit 'ud be a mighty po' lookin' gardin I reck'n!" He spied June's book. "Don't you know what's goin' to happun to you, Miss June, ef you don't stop you' readin' all th' time?"

"No, William, I don't."

"Well, I tells you. Ef you uses you' head so much th' gray mattah'll come thro' an' tun you'

hair."

"Does the gray matter of your brain ever get into your hair, William?" June involuntarily put her hand to her head.

"Hit sho'ly do, Miss June, an' ef you' hair tun gray, th' young men won't like you, sho' they won't!" William spoke with the utmost seriousness.

"That *would* be unfortunate!" June laughed.

"Sho' hit would! My Lord! don't you git to be one o' these batchelin maidens!—they keeps you' feelin' muss'd up all th' time a-bein' sorry for 'em, 'taint human natcher to live 'lone." He pulled up a plant by raking too emphatically.

Just then Hara—sleek-haired and white-aproned—slid into the garden. He presented to June a card on a tray. June looked at the name —"Mr. George Oliver" then down at her shoes —they didn't match her gown! "Hara, where's mother?"

"She go out."

June ran off to her room to change her shoes. Her heart fairly stood still when she thought of

seeing Oliver.

William smiled as he looked after her. "I reck'n th' young man's tuk'n my *egg*vise an' tried th' front do'— Whales! he's bin long time 'bout it!"

June found a note pinned on the door of her room.

"Lady. Please don't open window on this side every day because when open window many flies and the bugs come to your room. It is bad for you not only so. I must pack up cause time too much.

"Write by Hara."

Hara studied English diligently—this was the result. Evidently to him "pack up" was synonymous with "good-bye." June tucked the note in her belt much amused.

The events of the past weeks were crowding through June's mind in rapid succession. When her hand was on the latch of the living room door, she hesitated. Then with great force the

thought rushed upon her that if she did not open the door instantly and face George Oliver, she would never have the courage to do so. The consequence was she appeared so suddenly in the room as to give Oliver the impression that she was blown in by a chance gust of wind.

"I'm—glad to see you," June put out her hand, nervously.

"The only reason I can really believe it, is because *you* say so," Oliver's smile was magical. "And do I find your mother at home," he asked with measured dignity. "Your boy made no reply when I asked for 'the ladies'."

June explained that her mother was away. And the talk continued along conventional lines. June was self-conscious, and even Oliver was obviously ill at ease.

Presently he said— "There's been great excitement in the hotel today. They caught the men last night in Los Angeles who committed the robbery—nearly all of the Mansfield jewelry was recovered."

June flushed, but she saw by Oliver's manner

that whatever else Jack had told Oliver he had not told him the burglar story. "How is—Mr. Dodge," June ventured, uncertain of her ground.

"No better, poor fellow, all that I'm praying for is that he will get well and never know any one was mean enough to insinuate that he could have taken the jewelry."

June winced.

"Didn't Jack ever tell you anything about Franklin Dodge?" Oliver's face was troubled.

June shook her head in several different directions— "I—don't seem—to remember."

"It was this way," Oliver explained—"I knew Dodge at college, we were good friends, but when I came out here—after he had lost his health and his money—he would never come into the hotel to see me. So we frequently visited in the garden, evenings. I often consulted him about—matters—important to me. Never in my life," Oliver pitched his voice higher, "have I felt as I did when I came home from the North and found how things stood with

Dodge."

June fidgeted and took another chair.

Oliver dropped his voice to a more confidential tone— "My brother's fiancée and a party of friends who have been travelling around the world, were to spend a few days in San Francisco, and I ran up to show them the sights."

"Oh!" the exclamation came forth without June's intending it! "She's a very beautiful girl"—this confusedly—"and blushes prettily."

"Oh, yes, you saw her! her cheeks *were* like red roses whenever I mentioned my brother, but I didn't know that it was evident at a distance;" Oliver laughed.

June looked up at the clock as it warned four.

"Were you going out?" asked Oliver.

"Not until later. I promised Mrs. Knowles to go to the greenhouse and order her some flowers."

"Good, I'll take you now, if I may; the machine is outside."

June went to get her hat and gloves. She was so excited she jabbed the hat pins into her head

and tried to put both gloves on one hand.

"Where first, Mr. Oliver," the chauffeur asked.

Oliver looked to June for the order.

"I have to go to the Oak Knoll florists," she said, "and please don't let me forget, Mr. Oliver —five dozen carnations—as many pink buds as are to be had—and plenty of greenery."

"Everything pink, eh?"

"Yes, you know Mrs. Knowles is giving a series of sectarian functions. The flowers, I suppose, are meant to coincide with the religious views. Tomorrow it's Bridge—next Five Hundred—and then—a tea."

"Well, that's a new fad to me!"

"And to me! but Mrs. Knowles collects fads."

"Do you know what that woman reminds me of?" said Oliver, "a very good looking vase without a flower in it."

"I'll tell you how *I* shall always think of her?" said June, "as some one with whom I had a *listening* acquaintance."

"A *listening* acquaintance! that's good."

They had reached the florists. June ran in to see about the order.

When she came out, Oliver looked at his watch. "Suppose we take a run down to old San Gabriel and see the Mission!"

"I'm afraid it will take too long," June objected.

"Oh, no, we can easily make it in an hour."

June consented. She had forgotten that there was any trouble in the world. And Oliver had regained his usual easy, self-confident manner.

San Gabriel is a queer foreign looking little town of one street where low crumbling adobe houses leaned heavily upon one another. In the doorways swarthy specimens of humanity were idly standing—a mixture of Spanish, Mexican and Indian types. The loungers on the low verandas did not change their picturesquely lazy attitudes or even lift their eyes, as the car passed. Intruders in "red devils" came so often now-a-days! then too, it was some trouble to look up!

The old Mission stands at the end of the street. It seems to hold itself in a dignified and aristocratic aloofness from the town. Great pepper trees shade its ancient front— Immense cacti spread their protecting arms over the wall.

"Take the machine across there in the shade," Oliver said to the chauffeur, "and don't leave it!"

A handsome young Spanish boy came out of the Parish-house to unlock the church. A piece of white paper was tacked on the door. "Confessions daily in Spanish and English," June read aloud. Oliver, at her side looked—not at the paper—but down at the girl's face.

"We'll just look around by ourselves, if you please." Oliver handed the guide the admittance fee, with the addition of a generous tip. The boy looked at the money in his palm, smiled his thanks and disappeared.

June was already wandering about the musty old church. "See this wonderful old altar!"

"It's more effective from here," Oliver sank

down on a low bench. "Come and look at it from here."

June came, but with evident reluctance, and sat down at the further end of the bench. They were both perfectly silent, and did not look at each other.

Then Oliver slipped along the bench close to the girl's side. "June dear," he said, "it's time for confessions. Mine cannot wait any longer and will be in English—I love you now more than I ever loved you in my life—promise nothing shall ever come between us again!"

June fumbled the leaves of an old prayer book with trembling fingers—but she did not answer Oliver— He leaned over, and took her hand. She did not resist.

"How could you have believed that dreadful tale some one told you about my playing you against another girl, in order to win *her?*"

The prayer book fell from June's lap with a thud on the floor. So this was Jack's excuse for her conduct!

"Some time"—Oliver went on—"I won't ask

it now—you'll tell me who told you!"

"If—if only—you would never, never ask me!" June caught her breath as if she felt herself being precipitated into deep water.

"I'll agree even to that, darling girl, much as I wish to know, if you'll promise to love me."

"I'll promise—anything—if you'll never ask —who told me"—June's eyes were near to tragedy.

Oliver took her in his arms and kissed away the suspicion of tears— "Promise then, that some day—not too far distant—you will go up to the altar with me and let me declare you my wife before the whole world."

"Are you very, very certain that you love me enough for that?" June raised her eyes.

Oliver looked into them intently. "My answer is—May I ask your mother for you tonight?"

A sunbeam stole in and touched June's face—it was as beautiful as that of the Madonna above her—"Yes," she whispered.

"Excuse me, Mr. Oliver, but you've left your hat in the church," said the chauffeur as he stop-

ped the car before the church door. He looked at June's flushed cheeks and smiled significantly.

XX

WHEN June heard the chug—chugging of Oliver's machine that evening, she ran into her room and fastened the door.

That was the bell!— That was Hara flip-flapping to the door in his flat shoes— Now he was flip-flapping back again to find her mother — There was the murmur of voices— Where were they sitting? or were they still standing?— Oh no, of course they couldn't be standing, it

was such a long time since George came in! the clock was just striking when he rang the bell! She looked at her watch. He had been there just four minutes! She took a book and tried to read. She went over to her desk and began a letter to Jack and ended by upsetting the ink. She sat down by her dressing table and did her hair over. She pulled a pink rose out of the vase and tried its effect in different places in her hair— Wouldn't they *ever* be through talking.

After what seemed to her a very long time she boldly unlocked the door, as much as to say, "What in the world am I afraid of!"

She tiptoed across the patio and stood where she could peep through the French doors into the living room.

Her mother was standing. George was sitting there, looking very sober, and seemed not to notice that her mother had risen. He suddenly came to his feet. With a smile—'twas a pretty sad sort of a smile—her mother gave Oliver her hand and left the room.

June quickly slipped through the door to Oliver's side, questioning him with her eyes as she did so.

"Your mother makes a condition, June dear," he put his arm about her.

"Is it my health," her lip trembled.

"No, not your health sweetheart," he drew their chairs before the open fire. "I was not going to tell you about a play I've written until I knew whether it would succeed—I should not have told your mother—only she seemed unwilling to give you to me—because—well— She said even if father has plenty of money, she wants to be certain that I am able to do something myself. And now she makes her consent conditional on the acceptance of my play."

Oliver was a melancholy picture as he sat there looking into the fire. "If it doesn't succeed!" He took the poker and propped a glorious castle of coals that was about to fall into the ashes.

"It will succeed—if not now another time—I've faith enough in you for that, love— Is

the play finished?"

"Yes, and gone to New York, but not named."

"George," June spoke his Christian name with some embarrassment, "let me name your play! Call it—'The Blue Hen's Chicken!' "

"Where on earth did you get that name?"

"Why, that's what William calls me." Then she told him William's blue-hen-story.

"That settles it! 'The Blue Hen's Chicken' it is! I'll send the name on to New York!"

There's one question I've just been aching to ask you, George Oliver! How did it come out after the jewels were stolen? *Did* you put the blame on Thompson? wasn't his name Thompson?"

Oliver's face assumed a blank expression, as though he were deaf and couldn't make out, at first what June said. It finally dawned on him—

"June Winthrop," he dropped the poker and the castle fell—"are you a mind reader? How on earth did you find out about my plot? Did

Dodge—why, no, of course he didn't."

"Oh, you don't believe then in 'woman's intuition'?"

The pink rose in June's hair nodded coquettishly. "You see," she admitted, "I was sitting"— Then she told him what she heard him say to Dodge under the palm tree.

"You witch! I wish I had known you were there! I'd have moved round to the other side of that palm pretty quick! But great heavens! girl"— it had never occurred to Oliver before —"if some one who never knew me had heard that talk, they might have thought *I* stole the Mansfield jewelry."

"Yes—they—might have," June fidgeted uneasily.

"Poor Dodge! they suspected him just because some one saw him leaving the garden that night. What did *you* think Dodge and I were talking about?" Oliver was holding both of June's hands and looking into her face.

"I," she laughed out merrily, "why, I thought you were burglars!"

"No, really, what *did* you think?"

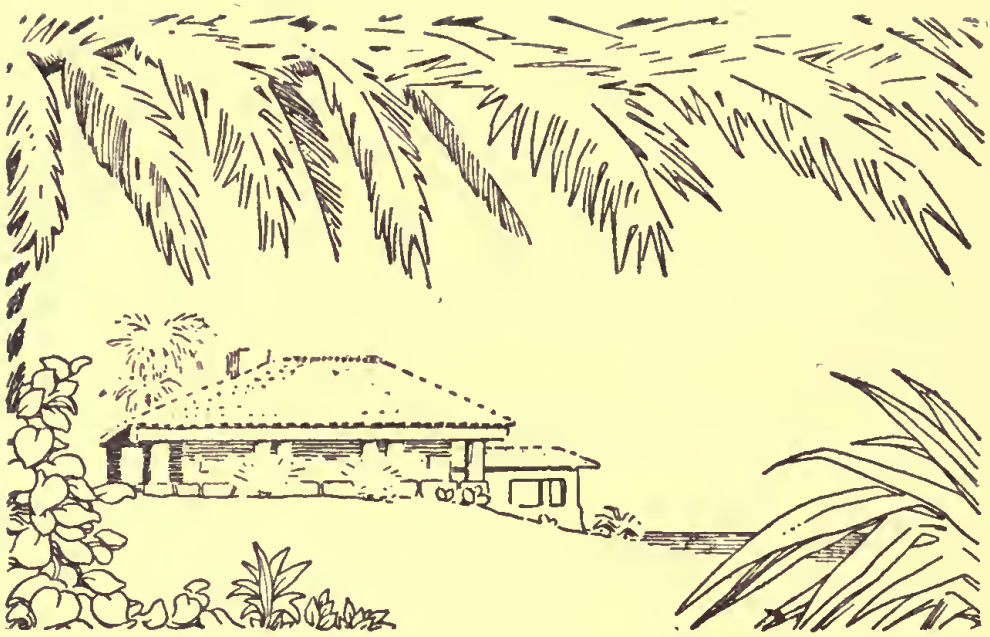
"Why really, I thought I was the heroine of a cheap melodrama, and that the villains were close at hand, and there was no possible means of escape."

"Anyway, it's lucky it was you, girl!"

"Yes, very lucky," June's conscience smote her.

The grandfather's clock doled out the hour. Oliver rose to go. "Please say 'good night' to your mother for me, sweetheart"—

William passed along the court-yard just then. Through the French doors, he saw a picture that drew forth his characteristic exclamation—"Whales!" he said under his breath, "I woren't 'spectin' it quite so soon!"



XXI

"BEST wishes to you, Miss June!" William took off his old straw hat with a sweep as he saw June coming into the garden.

"Don't I always have your best wishes?"

"*Sho!* but this 's a most pertick'ler mawnin', ain't it!"

"Why, William?"

"I don't say jus' w'y—I says, *ain't* it?" He went on quickly. His voice grew tender. "Did

you evah see th' sun so bright 'fo'? Did th' flowus evah look so purty? Did the birds evah sing so sweet?— 'Sposin' you rake heah, Miss June, while I spade roun' them white lilies— We might be needin' em most enny day."

"What *are* you talking about, William?"

"What I'm talkin' 'bout? Ain't it what you's talkin' 'bout?" William held his head on one side and looked at June in his quizzical way. "To be honest, Miss June, 'twore this way. Last night jus' fo' I wore a-gittin to bed, I recomembers that I's forgot to tun off th' waters— 'twouldn' a done for 'em to be a-runnin' all night on that rose bed—thar woren't no yuther way —I wore 'bliged to come back heah to see 'bout it. While I wore a-crossin' th' co't-yahd, my 'tention wore 'tract'd by th' 'lective lights in th' livin' room—an' when I looks in I sees th' mos' butifulest sight! I sho' that I'd had a re*veal*-ashun! Thar wore a butifu' young lady a-lookin' into a han'some young man's eyes—an' he wore a-lookin' in 'ers an' they wore a-holdin' han's an' "—

"William, it wasn't a bit nice of you to be looking through the door that way!"

"My daddy! th' Lord's give me eyes, Miss June."

June said nothing, but went on with her work.

"William ain't goin' to say nothin' to nobody. I sho' doos 'gratch'late you' lovah—an' I reckn's you's found a good man—co'se Mr. Oliveh do seem young but I reck'n he'll outgrow hit." June suppressed a smile. "You jus' take my *egg*vise, Miss June. William knows mos' men snaps off mighty easy! When you gits married you jus' give you' man th' easy bit. When you wants 'im to do sump'n, don't you juk so hard that his mouf'll bleed! You jus' swerve 'im—a little this way—an' a little that way"—William held out his arms as if he were driving— "En first you knows—you's got 'im trottin' th' gait you wants. Now my wife—I ain't a bein' disrespectabul to th' dead—she wore a po' driver! —she didn' nevah let you forgit you wore a bein' drove." William began spading again. "I

hopes, Miss June, you won't be a-gettin' married 'fore these lilies bloom!"

"Why William, it isn't settled yet?"

"Ain't settled *yit?*"

"I mean the *time.*"

"My Lord, I hopes hit ain't goin' to be one o' these long 'gagements—folks gits so tired of one yuther when they waits so long!"

June laughed. "If they get tired when they are engaged, how will it be when they are married?"

"Oh, that's diffrunt! When you's onct married you ain't 'spected to be a-smilin' and polite *all* th' time—but when you's only 'gag'd—you's boun' to keep up a sweet mouf!' He bent down and carefully scraped the dirt from his shoes. "I reck'n 'taint no 'fairs o' William's—hit's mighty 'portant tho' 'bout th' flowus! What's to prevent a-settin' th' day? I kin hole th' lilies back—er I kin fo'se em!"

"Well you see"—June was not quite sure that she ought to confide in William—"Mr. Oliver *writes*—and mother won't consent to our being

married until he has made a success of it."

William set his spade in the ground and sat on the handle. "Ain't that quare now! I knows some mighty fine folks ez couldn' scarsely write their names—an' agin I knowed a man down in Georgy ez cud write fine po'try—an' my Lord! he jus' woren't good for nothin'. But Misteh Oliveh doos seem to have plenty o' money."

"That's his father's money."

"Whales! money's money! Ef he kin have all he wants to use, whats th' diffrunce?" William was ready to defend Oliver's cause with spirit.

"Whar's Mr. Oliveh bin livin', Miss June?"

"Indiana, William."

"My Lord!— But I ain't nevah goin' to mind ef he doss come from Injanneh ef you jus' loves 'im. Ennyways you'se so sweet—you'll make up for th' short sock."

"The what, William?"

"You ain't nevah hear 'bout th' ole woman ez wore knittin' a pair o' socks an' th' first one she git too long an' then she make the yuther

too short for to balluns up. 'Cordin' to my obswervashun when it comes to marryin' hits jus' like th' socks—one of 'em has to make up for what th' yuther ain't—Mister Oliveh doos seem mighty nice—co'se I don't knows 'im well, but I feels I doos, cause I's allways seen his fleckshun in you' eyes."

There was a twinkle in William's own eyes. "There's one thing 'bout it, Miss June, Writin' or no writin', I'd ruther you'd marry Mister Oliveh 'an some *ole* man. I reck'n it's the' climate out heah—but folks ez is young an' sootabul to one yuther nevah seems to hitch up! My Lord, ole men a marryin' young girls—an' vices an' verses!" William tightened up his suspenders and laughed quietly—"Money! I reck'n—But th' purtiest rose in this garden didn't nevah bloom to be tempted by gold— I mean you, Miss June."

"I'm afraid I'm not exactly a rose, William, but you're right about the gold."

"Ain't you a 'Merkin Bewty' rose, Miss June? Sho' an' you might be a Bride rose most

enny day. Don't you worrits, Miss June; William's goin' to pray 'at the blue hen's chick'n gets 'er young man—I reck'n maybe he'll do somethin' 'sides pray."

XXII

MRS. WINTHROP went about with a preoccupied air. When she withheld her consent to the announcement of the engagement, she had said to herself—"In making this condition, I shall try the young man's mettle." Besides she was not able to adapt herself so quickly to the sudden change of events.

June was very restless, and felt a strange choking in her throat, when she tried to talk with

her mother.

Even William seemed under a cloud, as he went about his garden work.

The morning was beautiful. Oliver had telephoned to know whether June and her mother would go for a spin. Mrs. Winthrop begged to be excused, because of household duties, but June accepted with a smiling nod at the telephone, as if it had been Oliver himself.

William waited till June and Oliver were out of sight. He went up to the house and asked for his mistress. "You fine her in big room!" was Hara's answer.

William tapped softly at the living room door. Mrs. Winthrop opened it. William bowed very respectfully. "I asks you' pahdun, Miss Winthrop, but William has most 'portant mattahs to speak to you 'bout—ef you'd jus' step into th' co'tyahd for a little while."

Mrs. Winthrop knew that William had been at heavy expense at the time of his wife's sickness and death. Very likely he had gone into debt and wanted to ask for a little help.

When she was seated in the court-yard, she said kindly, "Are you in need of money, William?"

"Money!" William repeated, as if he were not sure he had heard right. "No, Miss Winthrop, 'tworen't 'bout money William wore goin' to speak. I cancers all my debts ev'ry month—I reck'n hit'll take some time to 'splain." He shifted from one foot to the other. He put his hand out against the trunk of the palm, as if to brace himself for the work of love he had undertaken. "I hopes you ain't goin' to think William's interferin' wid you' 'fairs, Miss Winthrop. William loves you-all. William 'ud lay down his life for you-all!"

Mrs. Winthrop looked intently at William. She could not doubt his love and loyalty.

"Hits 'bout Miss June, William wants to speak, Miss Winthrop."

Mrs. Winthrop's face took on a new look of anxiety. William saw it. "Miss June's sho' improvin' sence she came heah—'taint 'bout 'er health—hits 'bout 'er happiness, William would

speak—ef she's kep' happy, I reck'n she'll git well."

A cloud settled over Mrs. Winthrop's face. William felt that it promised ill for him. He said to himself "I'll jus' cast out all fear! "I wuz askin' Miss June," he went on, "when she 'spected to step off—I wore oncertain whether I'd bettah fo'se th' lilies or jus' let 'em come on natch'ral for th' weddin'."

Mrs. Winthrop gave an indignant start.

"An' Miss June"—William's eye followed the sunshine which was spattering the front of Mrs. Winthrop's black silk—"she woren't a-thinkin ez she wuz talkin' to ole William—she tole me that 'er mother had 'er *reesuns*—an' maybe she wouldn't git married ennyways 'tall. She seem dretfu' 'scourag'd an' down haht'd!" William dropped his eyes. " 'Peard to me like Miss June thot ez you thot ez Mistah Oliveh didn't have 'nough money."

Mrs. Winthrop moved her lips as if she were going to speak, but she still kept silent.

"William don't mean to be disrespectabul

Miss Winthrop— But you' sho' ain't a-goin' to let money stan' in th' way o' happiness! When you gits on th' Lord's scales to be weighed for 'ternity, you don't want to be thrown out 'count o' *money* notions." William breathed hard. His hand trembled, where it rested against the palm. William don't jus' want to say hit out an' out, Miss Winthrop, but you sho' is gittin' pinker an' pinker ev'ry day."

"Pinker!" It was the first word Mrs. Winthrop had spoken.

"Hits th' trufe, Miss Winthrop! You sees them white roses out'n thar thay ain't so pow'ful ole!—but they's sho' on th' opposite side o' youth! an' they's gittin' pink roun' the edges—an' when they onct gits started they grows pinker'n pinker, 'til bime by they jus'—*won't be thar 'tall!* Hit's th' Lord's way—thar ain't nothin' in this worl' goin' to live *all*ways. Some day Miss June's a-goin' to be left 'lone in this big worl'. Hit ud be a comfort to you to *know* that a good man wore a lookin' aftah you' little chic'n?"

William stood some moments with his head bowed. He walked solemnly out of the court-yard and closed the gate. He looked back as he went down the garden path. Mrs. Winthrop was still sitting there, looking off into space.

Meantime June and Oliver for whom William had bravely spoken, had crossed the Arroyo. On the bridge they stopped to look at the stream rushing noisily over its stony bed.

"It isn't an Arroyo *Seco* now, is it?" said June.

They climbed the heights on the opposite side. They followed the country road on through fields, that were once part of a famous ranch. The wild flowers glowed on every side.

"Well, here we are at another church!" said Oliver.

There it was nestled down among the hills—A little English country church! With space about it—grass and trees—God's sunshine streaming down upon it.

They left their car and as they passed through

"Some day Miss June's a'goin' to be left 'lone in this big worl'."

the old-time stile, June said, "Listen, they're reading prayers! It must be some special service. Can't we step in very quietly?"

They slipped into seats at the back, circumspectly. June joined reverently in the prayers. Oliver however could not resist the temptation to let his eyes rove over the quaint and charming interior.

They had joined the worshippers who were quietly leaving the portal. Oliver turned to a white-haired old man at his elbow. "What church is this, Sir?"

"This? Oh, this is the Church of the Angels!"

"A strange place for a church," said Oliver.

"It's a memorial," the white-haired man explained, "erected by the owner of this ranch to the memory of his mother and father."

The people took their different ways homeward over the hills.

"What a romantic place," June looked back at the pretty church, as they drove away.

"Yes—and *just* the place for a wedding, darl-

ing girl. I'm afraid the church will have fallen into decay before my play is accepted," Oliver sighed. "I had another talk with your mother yesterday—while you were away—and begged her to let us be married at Easter—but no, dear, I couldn't convert her to our way of thinking."

"The Winthrops never change their minds—that is, I've never known mother to."

"You think, then, there's no hope of our being married soon unless the play succeeds?"

"Just one—dear old William promised to pray for us."

XXIII

WILLIAM'S words of warning had their effect upon Mrs. Winthrop. As the days went by they gained force. "Some day Miss June's a-goin' to be left 'lone, in this big worl'" obsessed her.

It was now a little more than a fortnight before Easter. The lilies in William's garden were as high as his head. Their bloom showed faintly. They stood there in stately rows like tall

candles newly-lighted. The orange trees near the bungalow bore their golden fruit. Many of the branches were white with the waxen flowers. The air was heavy with their fragrance. A wealth of roses everywhere—and everywhere the songs of birds.

Mrs. Winthrop and June were reading in the courtyard. They heard voices—it was the Major and Mrs. Knowles. June put down her book to go to meet them.

Her mother put out her hand to stop her. "Daughter!" Mrs. Winthrop's voice trembled. "I shall"—she sat up straight in her chair—"announce your engagement, to the Major and Maria."

"Mother, mother, you blessed mother!" June flung her arms round her mother's neck.

"I have decided that it is best," Mrs. Winthrop's voice was broken—"but you will never know what it costs me until—you have a daughter of your own. If anything should happen to me"—

"Nothing in this world can happen to you,

mother dear! I will never let anything harm you!" They heard the rustle of Mrs. Knowles' skirts. "Don't tell them just yet!" June whispered. "I'm going to call up George, do let him know it first!"

The Major was all out of breath. After the greetings were over, Mrs. Knowles said, "I don't believe this climate agrees with the Major any longer."

The Major smiled rather sardonically.

"When one gets to our time of life," Mrs. Knowles went on, "nothing but a change now and then keeps one alive."

"Keeps *you* alive, you mean Maria!"

Mrs. Winthrop rung for afternoon tea. When it was brought, Mrs. Knowles rambled on about the relative advantages of renting a house or living at a hotel. "No," she said emphatically, "I can see no advantage or economy in having your own home."

"To *us* though, Maria," said Mrs. Winthrop, a home—a *real home* means so much—that—we are going to start a *new* one!" Then she

told them of June's engagement.

June herself appeared at the door.

"Your mother has just told us!" said Mrs. Knowles, as she set down her tea cup. She put her arm round June and kissed her effusively.

The Major gallantly kissed June's hand. "Oliver is as fine a fellow as I ever knew!"

"Indeed he is!" Mrs. Knowles chimed in. "You're in luck to get him!"

"You mean, Maria, Oliver's lucky to get June." The Major spoke emphatically. "I shall always like Oliver for what he's done for Dodge."

"And what is that," asked Mrs. Winthrop.

"You don't know?"

"No."

"Why, Dodge told me himself yesterday, that Oliver gave him the money to come out here with—that he has paid all his hospital expenses —and has gotten him a position as overseer on a big ranch."

"It's just like him," June was excited—"You'll both come to the wedding?"

"Yes, dear if it's soon." Mrs. Knowles sighed. "If it keeps on so warm, we shall have to be moving on."

June glanced quickly at her mother.

"Just after Easter, we think," Mrs. Winthrop spoke as if the details had been settled months ago.

The Major leaned back in his chair. He looked thoughtfully at June's mother. Then he said. "How well I remember *your* wedding-day, my dear Mrs. Winthrop!"

"Yes, of course you do, you were best man."

"And how frantic the General was, when between us, we lost the ring at the last moment—what a time we had finding it!" The Major laughed uproariously and slapped his lame knee —"I always had a suspicion, Mrs. Winthrop, that it was a pretty hard struggle for your mother to give you up."

A curious little smile trembled on June's lips.

The Major saw it. "Come here, you little rogue! I remember very well the day you were born. I met the General crossing the Common.

He walked right past me—pretending not to see me! Then he turned back. 'I'm not speaking to *ordinary* mortals to-day! We have a young lady up at our house. As she brought in the month, we are going to call her June.' Dear old fellow! wasn't he stepping high that day, though!"

An impatient little tap of Mrs. Knowles' foot brought the Major back from the happy past. He rose. He seized June's hands—"And now—that little baby girl has grown up—and she's asking us to *her* wedding! Why, I wouldn't miss it for worlds.

XXIV

IT was late in the afternoon. William's lilies were banked in front of the altar at the Church of the Angels. Long sprays of white roses from the patio had been twined about the chancel-rail. The wedding was to take place the next morning.

At the bungalow all was being made ready for the wedding breakfast. William was cutting the pink roses—June's favorites. June was following him about with a basket on her arm.

"I reck'n William's done 'bout all he kin for you, Miss June." William said sadly, "hit's 'bout th' last time he'll be goin' roun' heah wid th' blue hen's chic'n."

"That reminds me, William, I haven't told you that Mr. George has given his play that name."

"His *play!* Whales! I hopes he ain't one o' them *playacters,* Miss June!"

"Why, don't you remember I told you he was a *writer?*"

"William recomembers you wore sayin' ez how you' mother woren't *sats'fied* 'bout his writin' somehow. I didn't know ez you had *that* in you' mind. My daddy! whar did he git that name?"

"I gave it to him. I told him that's what you call me."

William was pleased. "Ez long ez he's got th' blue hen's chick'n, I s'pose he might ez well git th' name wid 'er."

June laughed. "William, we feel dreadfully to leave you behind, and I've been thinking that

perhaps when we get East, Mr. George's father might like to have you on his estate. Would you come, if I sent for you?"

William shook his head. "No, Miss June, thanks you jus' th' same. I's bin heah so long I's a *natif!* an' I wouldn't like to be goin' to a new country an' bein' a toorist agin—but Will' iam'll keep a-hopin' ez you'll come back heah."

"I certainly shall want to. I can't bear to leave you and my garden."

"Th' gardin and me 'll be mighty des'lut aftah t'morrow—th' house all shet up—an' th' lilies gone—an' no pleasunt voices round!" William brushed his sleeve across his eyes, as they passed under an orange tree. "Th' spidus webs is jus' turribul this Spring!" he said.

Jack was coming. He would arrive in time for dinner. June was giving a few final touches to the big room. Mrs. Winthrop was resting in an easy chair. There was a quick tap at the door. Oliver came in. He walked straight across the room to Mrs. Winthrop, and thrust a

telegram into her hand. He bent down over her. "It's accepted! Have I fairly won my prize, *mother?*"

"My dear boy!" she said and kissed him.

June stepped into the patio to take an armful of smilax from William.

"I reck'n its gittin 'bout my suppah time," said William. He pulled out an old silver watch by a worn leather cord. "This ole timepiece's 'bout all William's got left to be comp'any," he said sorrowfully. "T'day I's jus' bin done out wid it! Hits bin a tickin' in my pocket so fast, jus' wearin' th' life out o' me—cause I know'd you' time heah wore a-growin' shorter'n shorter — An' now, Mistah George, he's a-takin' th' little blue hen's chick'n way wid 'im! But he's a gentleman! an' he's got so much spirit he makes plesyoor spring up wharevah he go!— an' Miss June you's plant'd seeds o' kin'ness ev'rywhars, an' I hopes when you gits up thar," he pointed upward, "I hopes you'll have jus' one o' th' finest gardins they's got thar!" William looked off at the crimson and gold glowing in

the West— "That sun 'pears to be slow goin' down t'night. I reck'n its like me, hit wanted to stay wid you ez long ez possible. Good' night, Miss June. I'll see you-all in th' mawnin'."

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